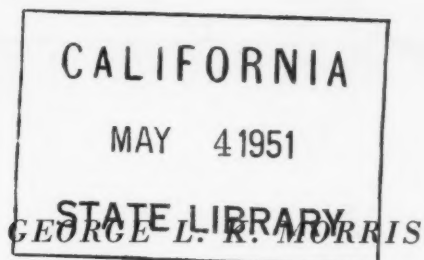


**WHAT
ABSTRACT ART
MEANS TO ME**



WILLEM DE KOONING

ALEXANDER CALDER

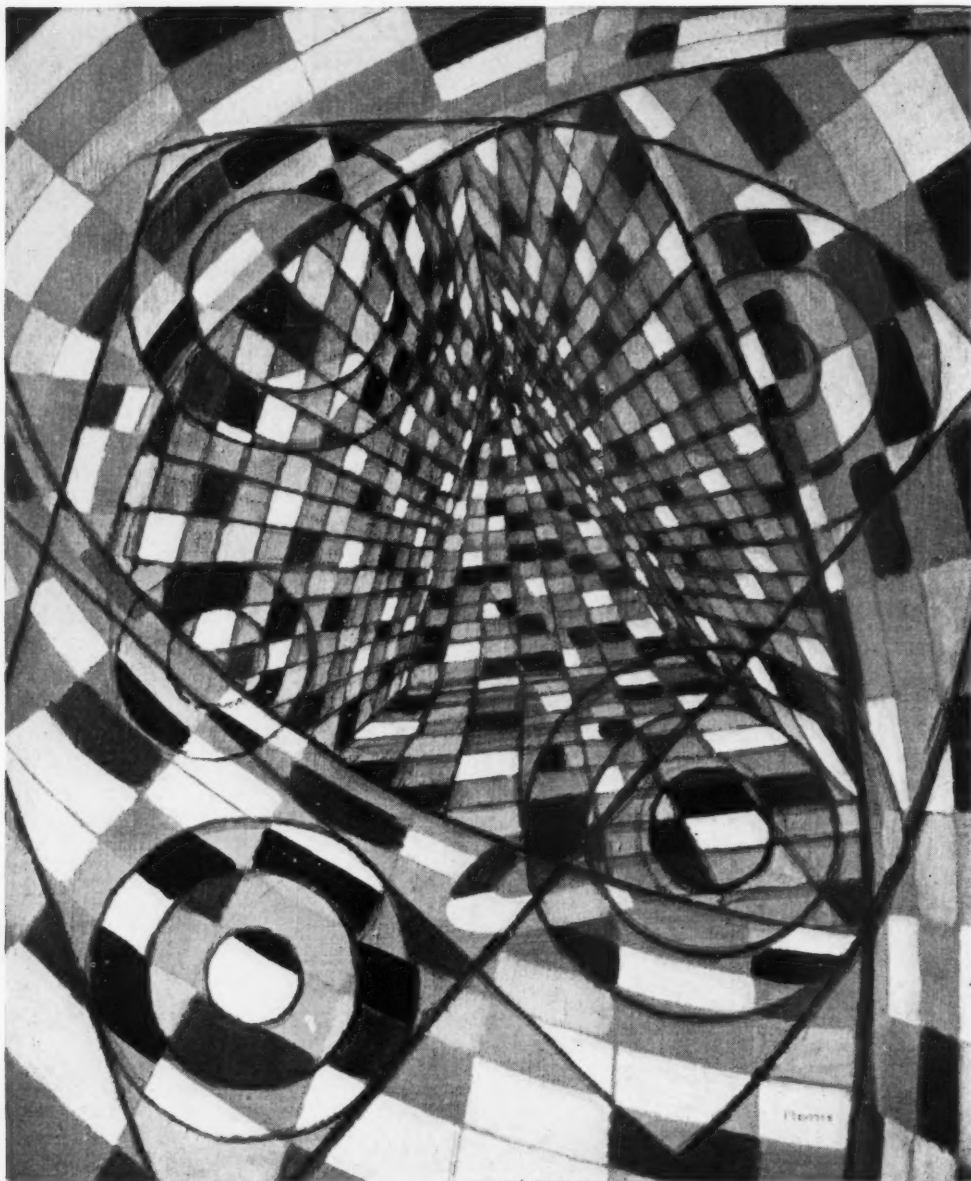
STATEMENTS BY SIX AMERICAN ARTISTS

FRITZ GLARNER

ROBERT MOTHERWELL

STUART DAVIS

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MORRIS: Suspended Discs. 1950. Oil, 23 x 19". The Downtown Gallery.

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WHAT ABSTRACT ART MEANS TO ME

On the evening of February fifth, 1951, the Museum of Modern Art presented a symposium on Abstract Art in connection with the exhibition then current in the Museum, Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America. Organized by a committee of the Junior Council, with Mrs. Mathew T. Mellon as chairman, and Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, acting as Moderator, this meeting aroused wide public interest and brought forth many requests for publication of the papers by the six artist speakers. The latter were asked to give their views on the proposition: "What Abstract Art Means to Me." Their statements follow, in the order in which they were read.

GEORGE L. K. MORRIS

Somehow it doesn't seem long since I trudged in a picket-line; in the street here, and in the rain. A fairly muted demonstration against the Museum, which wasn't always in a mood for showing abstract paintings by Americans. It was fun I suppose—needless to say, the picketing produced no results. Yet a majority of the picketers are visible through their works at the moment, upstairs on the third floor, where it's warm and out of the rain. However, this is no time to celebrate—in fact it's better if artists *never* celebrate. New abstract picket-lines are doubtless assembling, to protest the former picketers.

And I hope they are. It has been our contention from the start that the problems of abstract art can be hacked at from countless points of view. And it takes fanatics (in art as in history) to establish sound precepts. Our problems may not be new to art, but the conception of an abstract picture as we know it, certainly *is*. Can you imagine it in any other time — an artist just putting shapes together—shapes that represent nothing, either alone or in combination? He puts a frame around it, and offers it on the open market, just as

a good thing to have around and look at; something that will speak to you as an independent personality, and yet is very quiet.

No one has been offering art like this for very long; just forty years, and fitfully at that. Painters are only beginning to anticipate what happens to forms in design under given circumstances. Not much can be taken for granted, no art can ever accommodate rules; and there is plenty of room still to push and pull at the problems.

New possibilities for liberation—now we come to the sources of salvation or disaster. To free one's emotions—that's necessary, but it isn't very much in itself. Any one can find a way for that, and it certainly takes much more to produce life that will endure up on a wall. I have found in the long run that it's a counter-force, the effort of control and pacification, that releases character. It's this *harnessing* of freedom that has endowed great paintings with a poise and distinction to move us still after centuries. There lies a danger, always threatening, that the artist's sense of freedom will lead to false assumptions, that his own personality—seemingly so precious and unfettered—may be

more important than the thing he is after. The demands for controlling forces—those that will fit the emotional gamut exactly, moreover—are all too easily submerged.

Whistler's observation has been often quoted,—that an artist who paints Nature without a high degree of selection is like a "pianist who *sits* on the keyboard." Had Whistler been familiar with abstract art, he might have cautioned further against someone who "sits on his palette." If a painter *should* sit on the palette he'd probably produce something strong and brutal—there might even be a suggestion of agony. But can an artist thus found a base of operations on which to build a changing world and when the shock is over, how will it strike the eye in repose? Anyway, it should never be uniqueness we are after, but the basis of style.

This brings me to a second aspect. No one ever hated modern art more violently than our late critic, Mr. Royal Cortissoz. Yet I will honor him for a penetrating notation, which I frequently recall. He once summed up a modern exhibition with the outburst "This may be all very interesting, but Oh, the *looks* of it!" He puts forward so memorably a truth which can never be over-stressed—that painting is basically an optical experience. (And by "looks of it" we must hang on to our instincts for quality, and not false conceptions of appearance.) After this instantaneous effect, fine pictures of course require long and repeated study—but to a surprising degree the initial tell-tale glance will carry through. And for abstract art this test is merciless. There is no hiding from it through subject-interest; confusion can cloud it for a moment, but we are interested in something that will last.

Much more could be said about the two ingredients of abstract art—the emotional impulse and the structural fabric that is essential to make it credible. In primitive art the ability to fuse the two is quite natural and appropriate. No wonder the Cubists started from Negro sculpture—and they themselves produced a unity that was welded as tightly as a fist. How do we find this ourselves? There is not much to follow beyond one's qualitative sense. And now I am approaching the territory where words can hardly follow. Taste and quality are as difficult to trace consciously as to delineate the exact points of superiority between a rare vin-

tage-wine and a bottle of Coca-Cola. Yet it is a sense of quality which governs entirely the two points I have been stressing. One false note in an abstract picture can turn vintage-wine into a nasty medicine, and we must be ever alert for the taste. Moreover there are no rules for drawing the boundaries. Still, I will close with a generalization—that art produces two opposing forces, like the intake and outlet of the breath; it takes one individual impulse to activate a painting with life—the second fastens it with control, and makes possible a firmer activity toward the next creation.

WILLEM DE KOONING

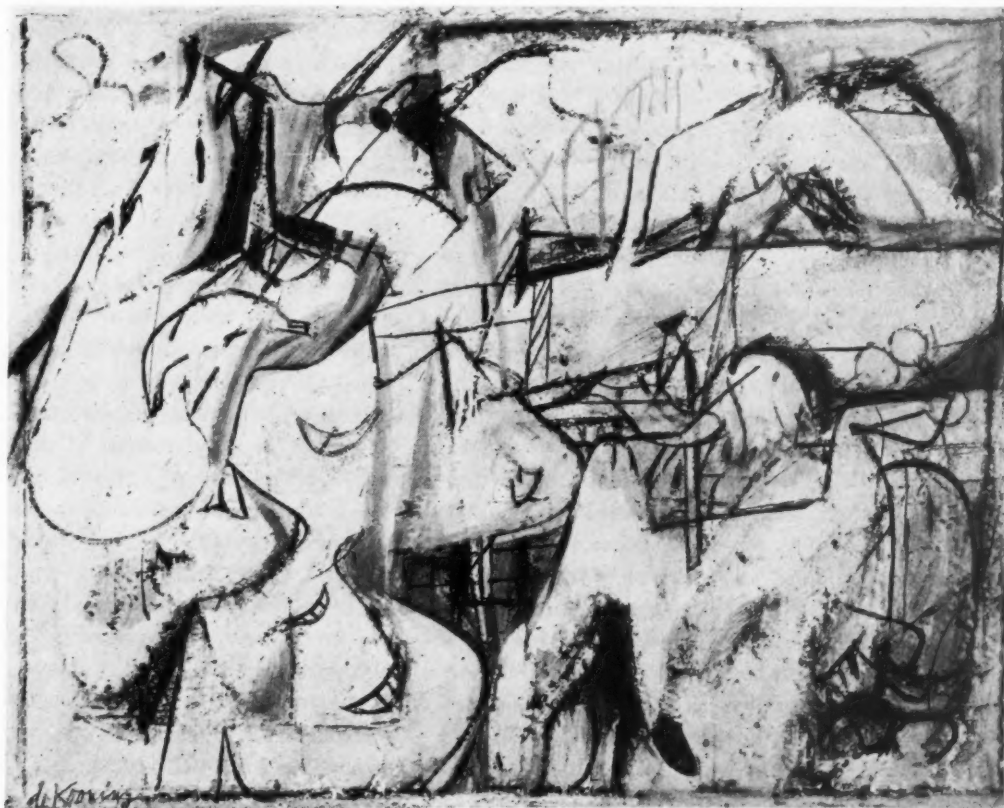
The first man who began to speak, whoever he was, must have intended it. For surely it is talking that has put "Art" into painting. Nothing is positive about art except that it is a word. Right from there to here all art became literary. We are not yet living in a world where everything is self-evident. It is very interesting to notice that a lot of people who want to take the talking out of painting, for instance, do nothing else but talk about it. That is no contradiction, however. The art in it is the forever mute part you can talk about forever.

For me, only one point comes into my field of vision. This narrow, biased point gets very clear sometimes. I didn't invent it. It was already here. Everything that passes me I can see only a little of, but I am always looking. And I see an awful lot sometimes.

The word "abstract" comes from the light-tower of the philosophers, and it seems to be one of their spotlights that they have particularly focussed on "Art." So the artist is always lighted up by it. As soon as it—I mean the "abstract"—comes into painting, it ceases to be what it is as it is written. It changes into a feeling which could be explained by some other words, probably. But one day, some painter used "Abstraction" as a title for one of his paintings. It was a still life. And it was a very tricky title. And it wasn't really a very good

one. From then on the idea of abstraction became something extra. Immediately it gave some people the idea that they could free art from itself. Until then, Art meant everything that was in it—not what you could take out of it. There was only one thing you could take out of it sometime when you were in the right mood—that abstract and indefinable sensation, the esthetic part—and still leave it where it was. For the painter to come to the “abstract” or the “nothing,” he needed many things. Those things were always things in life—a horse, a flower, a milkmaid, the light in a room through a window made of diamond shapes maybe, tables, chairs, and so forth. The painter, it is true, was not always completely free. The things were not always of his own choice, but because of that he often got some new ideas. Some painters liked to paint things already chosen by others, and

after being abstract about them, were called Classicists. Others wanted to select the things themselves and, after being abstract about them, were called Romanticists. Of course, they got mixed up with one another a lot too. Anyhow, at that time, they were not abstract about something which was already abstract. They freed the shapes, the light, the color, the space, by putting them into concrete things in a given situation. They *did* think about the possibility that the things—the horse, the chair, the man—were abstractions, but they let that go, because if they kept thinking about it, they would have been led to give up painting altogether, and would probably have ended up in the philosopher’s tower. When they got those strange, deep ideas, they got rid of them by painting a particular smile on one of the faces in the picture they were working on.



DE KOONING: *The Mail Box*. (1948). Oil on paper, 23 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 30". Coll. Nelson A. Rockefeller.

The esthetics of painting were always in a state of development parallel to the development of painting itself. They influenced each other and vice versa. But all of a sudden, in that famous turn of the century, a few people thought they could take the bull by the horns and invent an esthetic beforehand. After immediately disagreeing with each other, they began to form all kinds of groups, each with the idea of freeing art, and each demanding that you should obey them. Most of these theories have finally dwindled away into politics or strange forms of spiritualism. The question, as they saw it, was not so much what you *could* paint but rather what you could *not* paint. You could *not* paint a house or a tree or a mountain. It was then that subject matter came into existence as something you ought *not* to have.

In the old days, when artists were very much wanted, if they got to thinking about their usefulness in the world, it could only lead them to believe that painting was too worldly an occupation and some of them went to church instead or stood in front of it and begged. So what was considered too worldly from a spiritual point of view then, became later—for those who were inventing the new esthetics—a spiritual smoke-screen and not worldly enough. These latter-day artists were bothered by their apparent uselessness. Nobody really seemed to pay any attention to them. And they did not trust that freedom of indifference. They knew that they were relatively freer than ever before *because* of that indifference, but in spite of all their talking about freeing art, they really didn't mean it that way. Freedom to them meant to be useful in society. And that is really a wonderful idea. To achieve that, they didn't need *things* like tables and chairs or a horse. They needed ideas instead, social ideas, to make their objects with, their constructions—the "pure plastic phenomena"—which were used to illustrate their convictions. Their point was that until they came along with their theories, Man's own form in space—his body—was a private prison; and that it was because of this imprisoning misery—because he was hungry and overworked and went to a horrid place called home late at night in the rain, and his bones ached and his head was heavy—because of this very consciousness of his own body, this sense of pathos, they suggest, he was overcome by the drama of a crucifixion in a painting or the lyricism of a group

of people sitting quietly around a table drinking wine. In other words, these estheticians proposed that people had up to now understood painting in terms of their own private misery. Their own sentiment of form instead was one of comfort. The beauty of comfort. The great curve of a bridge was beautiful because people could go across the river in comfort. To compose with curves like that, and angles, and make works of art with them could only make people happy, they maintained, for the only association was one of comfort. That millions of people have died in war since then, because of that idea of comfort, is something else.

This pure form of comfort became the comfort of "pure form." The "nothing" part in a painting until then—the part that was not painted but that was there because of the things in the picture which were painted—had a lot of descriptive labels attached to it like "beauty," "lyric," "form," "profound," "space," "expression," "classic," "feeling," "epic," "romantic," "pure," "balance," etc. Anyhow that "nothing" which was always recognized as a particular something—and as something particular—they generalized, with their book-keeping minds, into circles and squares. They had the innocent idea that the "something" existed "in spite of" and not "because of" and that this something was the only thing that truly mattered. They had hold of it, they thought, once and for all. But this idea made them go backward in spite of the fact that they wanted to go forward. That "something" which was not measurable, they lost by trying to make it measurable; and thus all the old words which, according to their ideas, ought to be done away with got into art again: pure, supreme, balance, sensitivity, etc.

Kandinsky understood "Form" as *a* form, like an object in the real world; and an object, he said, was a narrative—and so, of course, he disapproved of it. He wanted his "music without words." He wanted to be "simple as a child." He intended, with his "inner-self," to rid himself of "philosophical barricades" (he sat down and wrote something about all this). But in turn his own writing has become a philosophical barricade, even if it is a barricade full of holes. It offers a kind of Middle-European idea of Buddhism or, anyhow, something too theosophic for me.

The sentiment of the Futurists was simpler. No space. Everything ought to keep on going! That's

probably the reason they went themselves. Either a man was a machine or else a sacrifice to make machines with.

The moral attitude of Neo-Plasticism is very much like that of Constructivism, except that the Constructivists wanted to bring things out in the open and the Neo-Plasticists didn't want anything left over.

I have learned a lot from all of them and they have confused me plenty too. One thing is certain, they didn't give me my natural aptitude for drawing. I am completely weary of their ideas now.

The only way I still think of these ideas is in terms of the individual artists who came from them or invented them. I still think that Boccioni was a great artist and a passionate man. I like Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Tatlin and Gabo; and I admire some of Kandinsky's painting very much. But Mondrian, that great merciless artist, is the only one who had nothing left over.

The point they all had in common was to be both inside and outside at the same time. A new kind of likeness! The likeness of the group instinct. All that it has produced is more glass and an hysteria for new materials which you can look through. A symptom of love-sickness, I guess. For me, to be inside and outside is to be in an unheated studio with broken windows in the winter, or taking a nap on somebody's porch in the summer.

Spiritually I am wherever my spirit allows me to be, and that is not necessarily in the future. I have no nostalgia, however. If I am confronted with one of those small Mesopotamian figures, I have no nostalgia for it but, instead, I may get into a state of anxiety. Art never seems to make me peaceful or pure. I always seem to be wrapped in the melodrama of vulgarity. I do not think of inside or outside—or of art in general—as a situation of comfort. I know there is a terrific idea there somewhere, but whenever I want to get into it, I get a feeling of apathy and want to lie down and go to sleep. Some painters, including myself, do not care what chair they are sitting on. It does not even have to be a comfortable one. They are too nervous to find out where they ought to sit. They do not want to "sit in style." Rather, they have found that painting—any kind of painting, any style of painting—to be painting at all, in fact—is a way of living today, a style of living, so to speak. That is where the form of it lies. It is exactly in its

uselessness that it is free. Those artists do not want to conform. They only want to be inspired.

The group instinct could be a good idea, but there is always some little dictator who wants to make his instinct the group instinct. There is no style of painting now. There are as many naturalists among the abstract painters as there are abstract painters in the so-called subject-matter school.

The argument often used that science is really abstract, and that painting could be like music and, for this reason, that you cannot paint a man leaning against a lamp-post, is utterly ridiculous. That space of science—the space of the physicists—I am truly bored with by now. Their lenses are so thick that seen through them, the space gets more and more melancholy. There seems to be no end to the misery of the scientists' space. All that it contains is billions and billions of hunks of matter, hot or cold, floating around in darkness according to a great design of aimlessness. The stars I think about, if I could fly, I could reach in a few old-fashioned days. But physicists' stars I use as buttons, buttoning up curtains of emptiness. If I stretch my arms next to the rest of myself and wonder where my fingers are—that is all the space I need as a painter.

Today, some people think that the light of the atom bomb will change the concept of painting once and for all. The eyes that actually saw the light melted out of sheer ecstasy. For one instant, everybody was the same color. It made angels out of everybody. A truly Christian light, painful but forgiving.

Personally, I do not need a movement. What was given to me, I take for granted. Of all movements, I like Cubism most. It had that wonderful unsure atmosphere of reflection—a poetic frame where something could be possible, where an artist could practise his intuition. It didn't want to get rid of what went before. Instead it added something to it. The parts that I can appreciate in other movements came out of Cubism. Cubism *became* a movement, it didn't set out to be one. It has force in it, but it was no "force-movement." And then there is that one-man movement, Marcel Duchamp—for me a truly modern movement because it implies that each artist can do what he thinks he ought to—a movement for each person and open for everybody.

If I *do* paint abstract art, that's what abstract art means to me. I frankly do not understand the question. About twenty-four years ago, I knew a man in Hoboken, a German who used to visit us in the Dutch Seamen's Home. As far as he could remember, he was always hungry in Europe. He found a place in Hoboken where bread was sold a few days old—all kinds of bread: French bread, German bread, Italian bread, Dutch bread, Greek bread, American bread and particularly Russian black bread. He bought big stacks of it for very little money, and let it get good and hard and then he crumpled it and spread it on the floor in his flat and walked on it as on a soft carpet. I lost sight of him, but found out many years later that one of the other fellows met him again around 86th street. He had become some kind of a Jugend Bund leader and took boys and girls to Bear Mountain on Sundays. He is still alive but quite old and is now a Communist. I could never figure him out, but now when I think of him, all that I can remember is that he had a very abstract look on his face.

ALEXANDER CALDER

My entrance into the field of abstract art came about as the result of a visit to the studio of Piet Mondrian in Paris in 1930.

I was particularly impressed by some rectangles of color he had tacked on his wall in a pattern after his nature.

I told him I would like to make them oscillate—he objected. I went home and tried to paint abstractly—but in two weeks I was back again among plastic materials.

I think that at that time and practically ever since, the underlying sense of form in my work has been the system of the Universe, or part thereof. For that is a rather large model to work from.

What I mean is that the idea of detached bodies floating in space, of different sizes and densities,

perhaps of different colors and temperatures, and surrounded and interlarded with wisps of gaseous condition, and some at rest, while others move in peculiar manners, seems to me the ideal source of form.

I would have them deployed, some nearer together and some at immense distances.

And great disparity among all the qualities of these bodies, and their motions as well.

A very exciting moment for me was at the planetarium—when the machine was run fast for the purpose of explaining its operation: a planet moved along a straight line, then suddenly made a complete loop of 360° off to one side, and then went off in a straight line in its original direction.

I have chiefly limited myself to the use of black and white as being the most disparate colors. Red is the color most opposed to both of these—and then, finally, the other primaries. The secondary colors and intermediate shades serve only to confuse and muddle the distinctness and clarity.

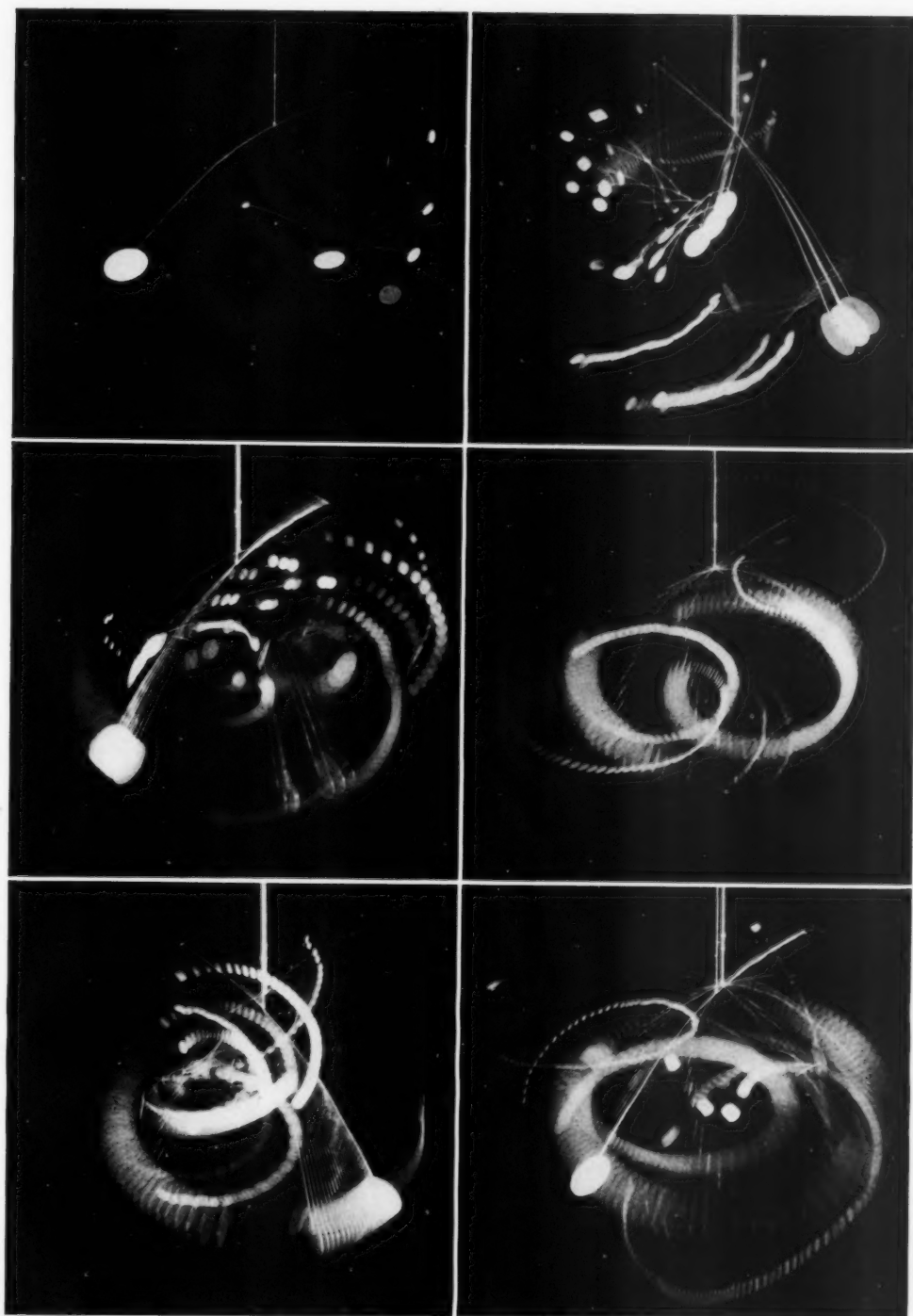
When I have used spheres and discs, I have intended that they should represent more than what they just are. More or less as the earth is a sphere, but also has some miles of gas about it, volcanoes upon it, and the moon making circles around it, and as the sun is a sphere—but also is a source of intense heat, the effect of which is felt at great distances. A ball of wood or a disc of metal is rather a dull object without this sense of something emanating from it.

When I use two circles of wire intersecting at right angles, this to me is a sphere—and when I use two or more sheets of metal cut into shapes and mounted at angles to each other, I feel that there is a solid form, perhaps concave, perhaps convex, filling in the dihedral angles between them. I do not have a definite idea of what this would be like, I merely sense it and occupy myself with the shapes one actually sees.

Then there is the idea of an object floating—not supported—the use of a very long thread, or a long arm in cantilever as a means of support seems to best approximate this freedom from the earth.

Thus what I produce is not precisely what I have in mind—but a sort of sketch, a man-made approximation.

That others grasp what I have in mind seems unessential, at least as long as they have something else in theirs.



CALDER: Hanging Mobile. 1936. Aluminum, steel wire. Ca. 28" wide. Coll. Mrs. Meric Callery. Still (upper left) and in motion.

FRITZ GLARNER

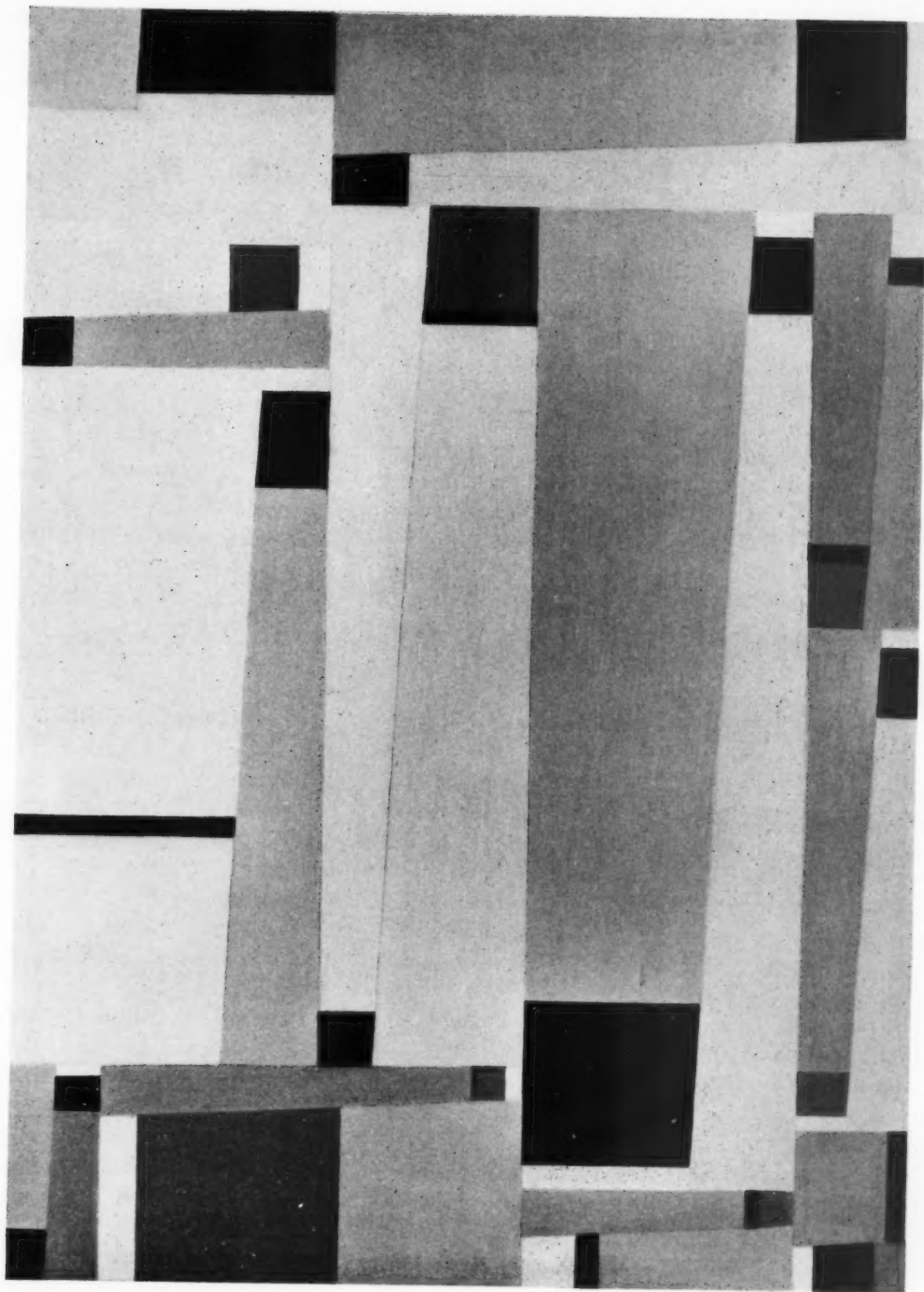
A painter should never speak because words are not the means at his command. Words cannot express visually dimension at a glance—they can only establish their own relationship in time. However, it is possible for a painter, at certain moments of his development to formulate some of the problems he is facing in the growth of his work. A painting cannot be explained. Words can only stimulate the act of looking.

A visual problem is never put a priori as a mathematical problem but is born in the process of painting and evolves in a state of unawareness of the painter.

Throughout my search for the establishment of essential values, throughout my struggle to free my painting from the naturalistic, I was impelled little by little to dematerialize the object, eliminating all that appeared to me as superficiality, reducing it to an appearance no longer specific—to a form symbol. When the motive for the form-symbol can no longer be identified by the spectator, a degree of abstraction has been obtained.

To liberate form, it is necessary for the form-symbol to lose its particularity and become similar to space. To liberate form it is necessary to determine space so that their structures become identical. When the form area and the space area are of the same structure, a new aspect arises in which pure means can reveal their intrinsic expression. The differentiation between form and space has to be established by color, proportion, oppositions, etc. Color, pure color, no longer assigned to dress up a particular form-symbol is free to act by its own true identity. It is my belief that the truth will manifest itself more clearly through this new condition.

Man can only free himself by a process of give and take. In painting form has to lose its specific identity and space has to acquire one by determination. To express life—its duality, its pulsations, its rhythms, its exact recurrences—the artist of our age should find through his own development the sensitive point of balance between the subjective and the objective expression.



CLARNER: Relational Painting. 1950. Oil, 58 x 48". Rose Fried Gallery.

ROBERT MOTHERWELL

The emergence of abstract art is one sign that there are still men able to assert feeling in the world. Men who know how to respect and follow their inner feelings, no matter how irrational or absurd they may first appear. From their perspective, it is the social world that tends to appear irrational and absurd. It is sometimes forgotten how much wit there is in certain works of abstract art. There is a certain point in undergoing anguish where one encounters the comic—I think of Miró, of the late Paul Klee, of Charlie Chaplin, of what healthy and human values their wit displays. . .

I find it sympathetic that Parisian painters have taken over the word "poetry," in speaking of what they value in painting. But in the English-speaking world there is an implication of "literary content," if one speaks of a painting as having "real poetry." Yet the alternative word, "esthetic," does not satisfy me. It calls up in my mind those dull classrooms and books when I was a student of philosophy and the nature of the esthetic was a course given in the philosophy department of every university. I think now that there is no such thing as *the* "esthetic," no more than there is any such thing as "art," that each period and place has its own art and its esthetic—which are specific applications of a more general set of human values, with emphases and rejections corresponding to the basic needs and desires of a particular place and time. I think that abstract art is uniquely modern—not in the sense that word is sometimes used, to mean that our art has "progressed" over the art of the past; though abstract art may indeed represent an emergent level of evolution—but in the sense that abstract art represents the particular acceptances and rejections of men living under the conditions of modern times. If I were asked to generalize about this condition as it has been manifest in poets, painters, and composers during the last century and a half, I should say that it is a fundamentally romantic response to modern life—rebellious, individualistic, unconventional, sensitive, irritable. I should say that this attitude arose from a feeling of being ill at ease in the universe, so to speak—the collapse of religion, of the old close-knit community and family may have something to do with the origins of the feeling. I do not know.

But whatever the source of this sense of being unwedded to the universe, I think that one's art is just one's effort to wed oneself to the universe, to unify oneself through union. Sometimes I have an imaginary picture in mind of the poet Mallarmé in his study late at night—changing, blotting, transferring, transforming each word and its relations with such care—and I think that the sustained energy for that travail must have come from the secret knowledge that each word was a link in the chain that he was forging to bind himself to the universe; and so with other poets, composers and painters . . . If this suggestion is true, then modern art has a different face from the art of the past because it has a somewhat different function for the artist in our time. I suppose that the art of far more ancient and "simple" artists expressed something quite different, a feeling of *already* being at one with the world. . .

One of the most striking aspects of abstract art's appearance is her nakedness, an art stripped bare. How many rejections on the part of her artists! Whole worlds—the world of objects, the world of power and propaganda, the world of anecdotes, the world of fetishes and ancestor worship. One might almost legitimately receive the impression that abstract artists don't like anything but the act of painting. . .

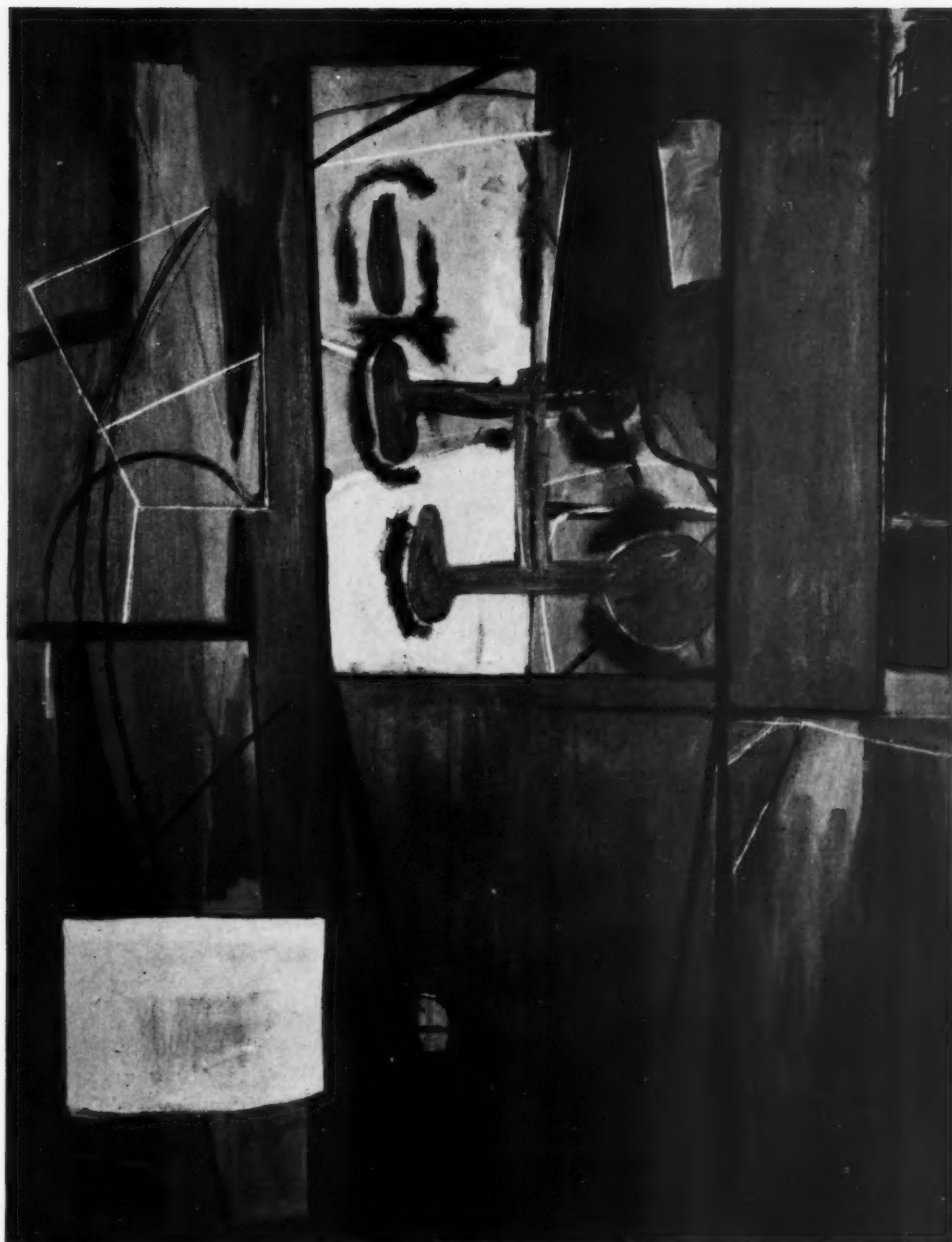
What new kind of *mystique* is this, one might ask. For make no mistake, abstract art is a form of mysticism.

Still, this is not to describe the situation very subtly. To leave out consideration of what is being put into the painting, I mean. One might truthfully say that abstract art is stripped bare of other things in order to intensify it, its rhythms, spatial intervals, and color structure. Abstraction is a process of emphasis, and emphasis vivifies life, as A. N. Whitehead said.

Nothing as drastic an innovation as abstract art could have come into existence, save as the consequence of a most profound, relentless, unquenchable need.

The need is for felt experience—intense, immediate, direct, subtle, unified, warm, vivid, rhythmic.

Everything that might dilute the experience is stripped away. The origin of abstraction in art is



MOTHERWELL: *Personage*. 1943. Oil, 48 x 38". Norton Gallery and School of Art.

that of any mode of thought. Abstract Art is a true mysticism—I dislike the word—or rather a series of mysticisms that grew up in the historical circumstance that all mysticisms do, from a primary sense of gulf, an abyss, a void between one's lonely self and the world. Abstract art is an effort to close the void that modern men feel. Its abstraction is its emphasis.

Perhaps I have tried to be clear about things that are not so very clear, and have not been clear about what is clear, namely, that I love painting the way one loves the body of woman, that if painting must have an intellectual and social background, it is only to enhance and make more rich an essentially warm, simple, radiant act, for which everyone has a need. . .



DAVIS: Hot Still-Scape for Six Colors. 1940. Oil on canvas, 36 x 45". Coll. Jan de Graaff.

STUART DAVIS

I think of Abstract Art in the same way I think of all Art, Past and Present. I see it as divided into two Major categories, Objective and Subjective. Objective Art is Absolute Art. Subjective Art is Illustration, or communication by Symbols, Replicas, and Oblique Emotional Passes. They are both Art, but their Content has no Identity. Their difference cannot be defined as a difference of Idiom, because all Paintings have the Laws of Design as a common denominator. Design exists as an Idiom of Color-Space Logic, and it also exists in an Idiom of Representational Likenesses. Objective Art and Subjective Art exist in both Idioms. Their difference can only be defined in terms of what the Artist thinks his Purpose means—its Content as a Design Image.

Objective Art sees the Percept of the Real World as an Immediate Given Event, without any Abstract Term in it. But there is Consciousness of Change, of Motion, in it. The Real Object, its Image in the Idiom of Idea, and the external Image of Idea as Design, are experienced as a simultaneous event in Consciousness. These three distinct realities are Perceived as a single Object; a Headline on the Display-Surface of Common Sense. The consciousness of change experienced in these separate identifications is understood as the Total Form of this Object. To know this is the experience of its Free Accomplishment; an act amenable to Volition. This is the Total Appearance, hence Total Content of Objective Art, Absolute Art. Its Universal Principle is the Sense of Freedom.

Subjective Art is a 'Horse of Another Color,' to use the current Bop phrase; as it refers to shots of 'Horse,' or Heroin, which come in different colors to suit the Esthetic Taste and Poetic Mood of the client. Taste and Mood are well-known attributes of Subjective Art, inherent in its concept of Re-

ality. Unlike Objective Art it sees the Change between the Real Object, the Idea Object, and Real Design, as an Abyss, a Chasm, a Void. These terms appear frequently in its literature, and often as Holes in the Paintings. Its concept of Universal Principle has no Objective continuity. Spanning the Gaps in it is accomplished in an emotional Context of Anxiety, Fear, and Awe. That is how Subjective Art was born. Its Universal Principle has more the character of a Universal Bellyache.

The Security Image of Objective Art is in the Familiar Likeness of Change as a Topical Subject. But the Security Image of Subjective Art has a hypothetical location somewhere in Tibet. As a result it has become the greatest builder of Arachnoid Bridges in the world. Like the Laminated Iconography of the Scholars, it has a Perverse Passion for the Detour. It Eschews Route 66, and has a million broken bones to the mile. Over 30 years ago, Learned Proponents for Expressionism variously identified its Content as a "Psychic Discharge"; "Soul-Substance"; and a "Belch from the Unconscious," communicating the Distress of the Suffering Artist, as a sort of Moral Cathartic.

My interest in Art does not arise from this kind of Distraction, which still has a number of Fans. Art is not a Subjective Expression to me, whether it be called Dadaism, Surrealism, Non-Objectivism, Abstractionism, or Intra-Subjectivism. But when paintings live up to these Advance Agent Press Releases, I turn on the Ball Game.

Fortunately any similarity between the Painting and the Publicity is purely coincidental in many cases. In such a number of cases, in fact, that Modern Art as a whole is not more subjectively expressionistic in character than the most Durable Remains of Past Art. So-called Abstract Art to me is an Idiom of Color-Space Logic as the Design of a Topical Subject, understood as the Universal Free Subject. In that understanding there is No Abstract term. My intention is to keep it that way.

MUSEUM NOTES

PUBLICATIONS

Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America by Andrew Carnduff Ritchie. Within the past ten years the production of abstract painting and sculpture has been steadily increasing in this country. This is the first book to review the abstract movement in America from its beginnings in 1912 to the present.

This book contains detailed answers to the questions of how and why many artists of our time have been led to work in an abstract style, as well as a brief illustrated summary of the abstract movement in Europe. Against this background the author places the pioneer Armory Show generation of American artists and the first wave of abstract art in America from 1912 to about 1925. Nearly half of the book is devoted to the second wave of abstraction which began about 1930 and appears to be still at its crest.

More than one hundred plates document the book and illustrate the great diversity of style and feeling within what is popularly regarded as a narrowly limited tradition.

Mr. Ritchie is Director of the Painting and Sculpture Department in the Museum of Modern Art and has written on many aspects of contemporary art including the two recently published monographs, *Charles Demuth* and *Franklin C. Watkins*. 160 pages; 127 plates (8 in color); price \$5.00.

Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Picasso is the most famous and, very possibly, the greatest living painter. In the brilliant succession of his styles and discoveries may be seen to a large degree the development of art in our time. This second edition is the most comprehensive book on Picasso thus far published. Paintings, drawings, sculpture, prints, and ballet designs are reproduced and discussed. It also contains several statements by the artist himself as well as a bibliography of more than five hundred and fifty titles, lists of the works by Picasso in American museums, of books illustrated by Picasso, and of ballets for which he made designs.

"The strength and weakness of Picasso is fully documented in a sumptuous illustrated record . . . discreet commentary and full notes make as plain as possible the baffling questions which surround every aspect of this painter's art." *Times Literary Supplement*, London. 312 pages; 330 plates (7 in color); price \$7.50.

Relation Between Poetry and Painting by Wallace Stevens. The lecture given at the Museum of Modern Art on January 15th and now published in booklet form. 12 pages; price 35¢.

Modigliani—Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture by James Thrall Soby. "He was essentially a traditionalist who happened to have caught fire from the excitement of a contemporary idiom . . . In any case there is enough of Modigliani's work, enough to guarantee him a lasting place, to assure us a pleasure that only true artists can give at all and few today with so deft a hand." 56 pages; 40 plates (2 in color); price \$1.50.

Soutine by Monroe Wheeler. For many years Chaim Soutine has been a famous figure in modern art although his work has not been widely seen. As early as the twenties his paintings entered into important collections here and abroad, but there was only one exhibition of any consequence during his lifetime, and this is the first book about him to appear in English.

Soutine, an immigrant to France from Lithuanian Russia, produced early work of the most violently lyrical expressionism: wild rhythms of landscape loosed on the canvas, and faces and figures twisted with the intensity of the life within them. He first became celebrated for still-life's of birds, fish and carcasses of animals, shockingly realistic, but rendered in powerful form and magnificent color. Then came a brilliant series of figure paintings: pastry-cooks, choir boys and domestic servants, and some of the finest modern landscapes in the classic tradition.

Monroe Wheeler, Director of Exhibitions and Publications of the Museum, and author of *Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators* and *Twentieth Century Portraits*, has written a revealing account of the singular temperament of this man of genius who has begun to have a decisive influence on the younger generation of painters, especially in the U. S. 120 pages; 75 illustrations (10 in color); price \$3.95.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19

the

CALIFORNIA

JUL 19 1951

STATE LIBRARY

poster

collection

museum of modern art bulletin

recent acquisitions



above

Your talk may kill your comrades, 1943
Abram GAMES (British)

Hitler is breaking through the non-aggression p
1942?

Kukryniksy (Russian)
Composite name for 3 artists

Liberation of Paris, 1944
Paul COLIN (French)

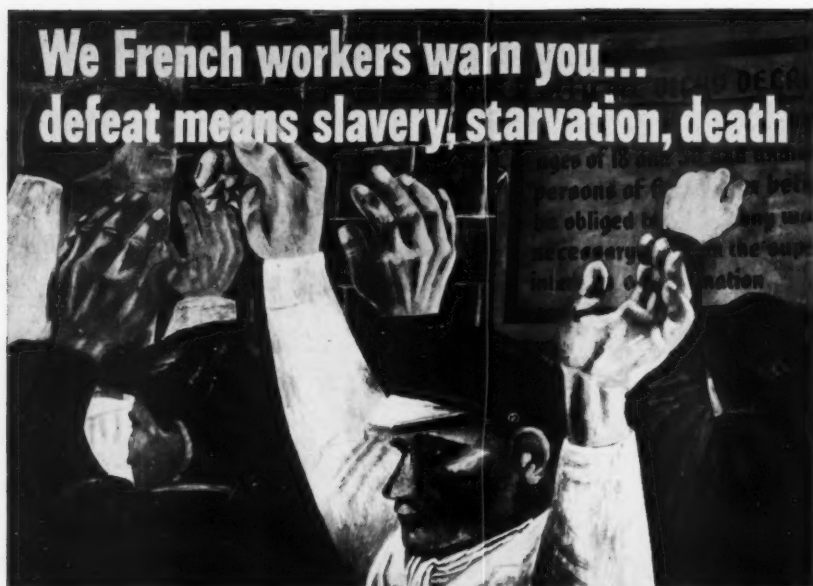
left

We French Workers warn you . . ., 1942
Ben SHAHN (American)

below

America's answer! 1942
Jean CARLU (French)

Anti-fascist conference, 1943
Raul ANGUIANO (Mexican)



the poster collection

In 1944, the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition and publication, *Art in Progress*, presented an extensive though incomplete survey of the posters in the Graphic Design Collection. During the last seven years the collection has more than doubled, and today numbers approximately 1200 outstanding examples of contemporary poster art in this country as well as abroad.

Two factors contribute to this growth:

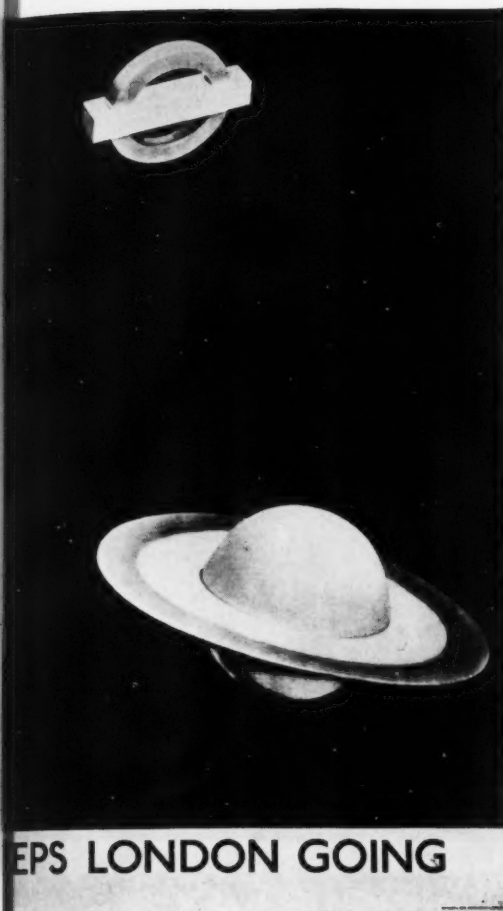
1) The enormous impetus of the war years which produced posters in great quantity for international wartime propaganda: British posters strong in pictorial symbolism and staggering in number; FFI (Force Française Interieure) material issued by clandestine presses among which is the famous *Liberation of Paris* Poster; German posters which sought to evoke patriotism at home and to popularize invaders in occupied areas; the Swiss street mural serving trade, politics and culture; Soviet window and wall pictures, lively forceful caricatures, rich in graphic quality; the ever popular litho posters of the Mexicans proclaiming their alliance with the antifascist causes; posters of the period of national defense, and war posters of the government agencies in the United States, a relief from the conventionalized image of the advertising formulas.

2) The continued use of posters in the post-war period, after their great effectiveness and persuasiveness had been indicated. The advertising and the institutional poster have illustrated their ability to deliver a message with great impact—Brazil urges the importance of census; Czechoslovakia spreads news of her cultural activities; post-war Germany brings recreation and opportunity for education to adults; Italy, devastated by bombs, welcomes the CIAM; Britain urges air travel; New York Subways posters sell art education, the services of a daily newspaper along with butter, whiskeys and movies. Even the world of television is invaded by posters used to illustrate news broadcasts and commercials.

The swiftness and sureness of public reaction to printed visual material, designed to have immediate impact and cumulative effect, has convinced governments, business and social organizations of the ability of posters to project an idea, to offer visual communication in contemporary terms. A trinity composed of *harmony* of arrangement, *clarity* of concept, and *practicality* of presentation can translate a multitude of ideas into a terse verbal and pictorial message. Although simplicity is essential, this simplicity must not be an armature on which facts are molded. It must be simplicity abstracted from the complexities which arise when a subject passes through the mind of a seller and a designer to a buyer. It must be the end result of a breaking away of all irrelevancies. The designer can help to present a subject, whether commodity or idea, stripped to its pith. This simplification permits easy repetition, and repetition provides the most elementary means of impression and education.

The posters in the Museum of Modern Art's collection of Modern Graphic Design indicate many departures from tradition and regimentation. Experimentation with tools, materials and principles have produced these departures. Because there is no fixed poster style, nor poster medium, only the limitations inherent in the poster limit the artist. The designer is free to invent his own style or to adapt for his personal interpretation the concepts that have been evolved in other art forms. The line of demarcation between poster art and other twentieth century art forms—painting, architecture—is wavering, and the inventions and discoveries of the artists provoke practical use by the designers. Thus we find in poster design today the diagonal axis, the square and the circle of the *Suprematists* of the twenties; the bold angularity of geometric arrangements of the *Stijl* school of design; the cubism of Picasso; the fluid line of Braque; the freely molded shapes of Arp and Miro; the precise, smooth, careful compositions of Léger and Corbusier; the surrealism of Dali and Tchelitchev, touching on mood, motive and memory; proven methods for the compact merging of form and content.

Two recent outstanding gifts have brought some important posters into the Museum Collection: French and English examples of the late twenties and early thirties presented by Bernard Davis; the Jan Tschichold Collection of posters and graphic design—examples of the early and middle twenties and thirties of German, Russian, Czechoslovakian, Hungarian and Swiss origin presented by Philip C. Johnson.



BALLETS RUSSES DE MONTE-CARLO

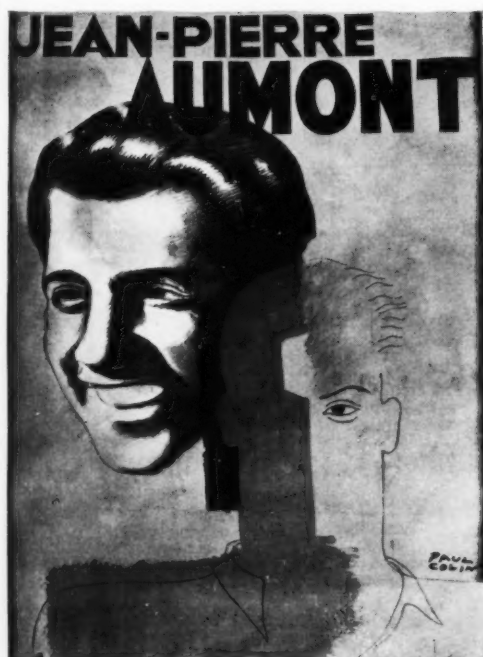
DIRECTEUR GÉNÉRAL: W. DE BASIL
DIRECTEUR ARTISTIQUE: RENE BLUM



above
Keeps London Going, 193—
Man RAY (American)
Worked in England

Ballets Russes, 1933
André MASSON (French)

left
Jean-Pierre Aumont, 193—
Paul COLIN (French)





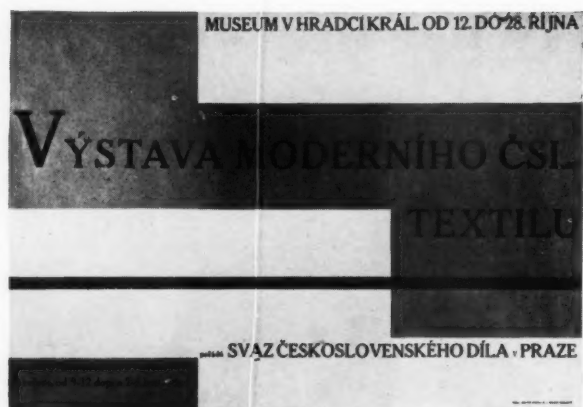
left

Exhibition of Constructivism, 1937
Jan TSCHICHOLD (German)
Works in Switzerland

Visit the Modern Textile Exhibition, 1930
Ladislav SUTNAR (Czech)
Now in U.S.A.

below

European Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1927
Herbert BAYER (German)
Now in U.S.A.



The group of more than 70 French and English posters was presented in 1950 by Mr. Davis, well known Philadelphia collector and philanthropist, who feels posters "... are a very important art medium and the form of modern art most available to the greatest portion of the people who can see them on the streets . . . these works can change the appreciation of people for art." A selection of these posters was exhibited in the Museum in May, 1950. Four outstanding examples are reproduced in this Bulletin: on the back cover the famous Cassandre Dubonnet poster showing a brilliant application of geometric stylization; on page 5 the Paul Colin of Jean-Pierre Aumont showing the cubist influence of the period; the photograph of Man Ray for the London Underground; and the dynamic linear impressions of André Masson for the Ballets Russe.

The Tschichold collection is of great value because it represents the important schools of *De Stijl* and *Suprematism* (fused in the Bauhaus atmosphere) as they affected design in Germany, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Switzerland. The complexities of national characteristics that make up these heterogeneous groups give them individuality of expression, technique and method. However, the overpowering yet subtle influence originated and spread by the Bauhaus disciples with common points of view adapted for artist, architect, and designer, produced a vocabulary and grammar which permeated the work of all countries.

An exhibition is planned for next season which will show the graphic design material, including posters from this collection, originally gathered by Jan Tschichold, himself a master typographer. On page 6 we reproduce the following noteworthy examples: the Swiss exhibition poster of Jan Tschichold, with superb typographic layout employing lower case lettering and the device of minute characters on a large white background inviting close inspection; the Herbert Bayer German exhibition poster of 1927—typically vertical and horizontal but liberated from rigidity by the playful use of color and spacing; the Ladislav Sutnar poster from Czechoslovakia which is a fine example of clear communication in its most vivid form. All three posters represent the power of words, the authority and ability of written characters to focus attention without the help of a pictorial image.

Other smaller gifts too numerous to mention have also been presented to the Museum. Particular thanks are due to the cultural offices of many of the foreign governments with which we are in constant touch and from whom we receive up-to-date material, to individual artists, and to friends of the Museum who bring in rare single pieces from time to time. Posters which are original lithographs, drawn directly on the stone by the artists themselves (such as the Picasso reproduced in this Bulletin), are also collected by the Print Room. The efforts of the Department of Architecture and Design to keep in touch with graphic design publications and sources of posters throughout the world have kept the collection up to date and representative of the best poster art.

A brief survey of post-war design in its international development (as it is represented in the collection of the Museum) indicates that much young talent has appeared along with the experienced designers of known achievement. The young designers have offered no innovations, no new daring, but have gracefully digested the suggestions of the past and have with vitality and refinement produced work of impressive visual effect.

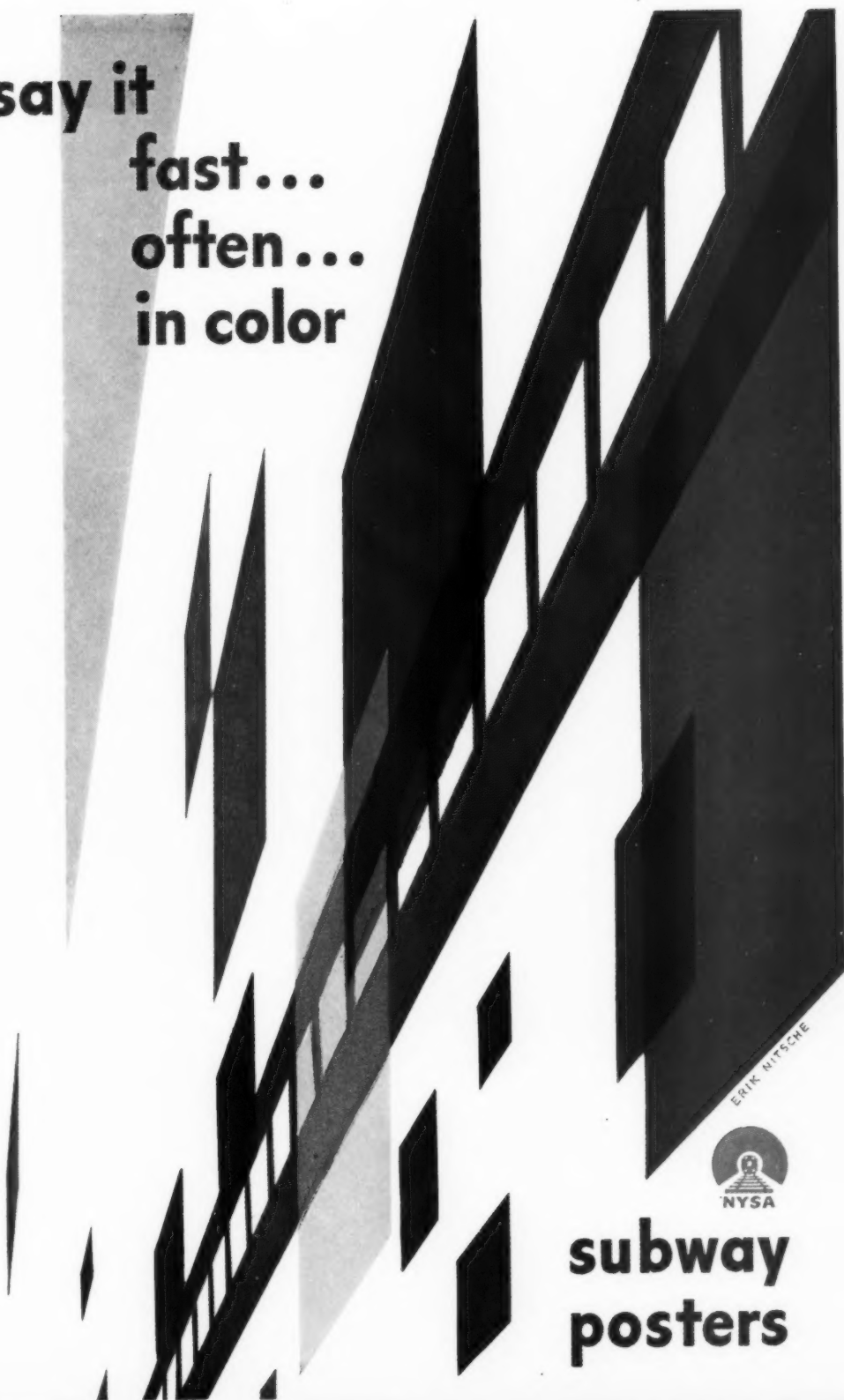
The Americans, Erik Nitsche, E. McKnight Kauffer, and Paul Rand, experienced craftsmen, are represented by fresh designs of lively personal interpretation. Nitsche's poster for the New York Subways produces a sense of spontaneous motion with its oblique pattern; Kauffer's mastery of simple geometric form is evident; and Rand's effective simplicity with sure knowledge of type and composition shows a practiced hand. Among the newcomers, George Krikorian vitalizes a typographic poster with rich color and space modulation; A. F. Arnold's well-knit design of line and tone texture has wide appeal even though it was aimed at a specialized, limited audience; Milton Ackoff's photomontage gives double emphasis to the message; and Milton Wynne uses line and lettering in a rhythmic, balanced poster. These are among the brighter lights of our movement toward a fresh expression in the field of graphic design.

The unconventional travel poster—a poetic translation of reality—is rendered by graphic and imaginative handling of the limitations of space in the Lewitt-Him poster. The British have extended their prolific war production of posters into the present and have produced excellent pieces by A. Games, Zero, Henrion, and others.

The Czechs and the Poles have taken up their graphic art with new vigor. The energetic, intuitive work of the Czech artists is evident in the *Traveling Exhibition* poster by a team of three artists, Duda, Misek and Tyfa. Of course there has been an overwhelming acceptance and use of the stylized French poster form, but often a personal, sophisticated graphic expression appears such as in the film poster produced in Poland by Zamecnik-Stryjecki.

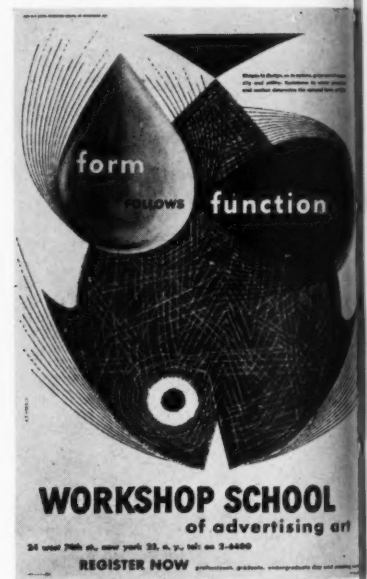
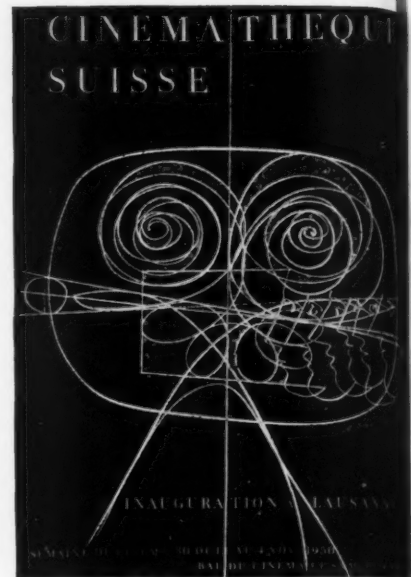
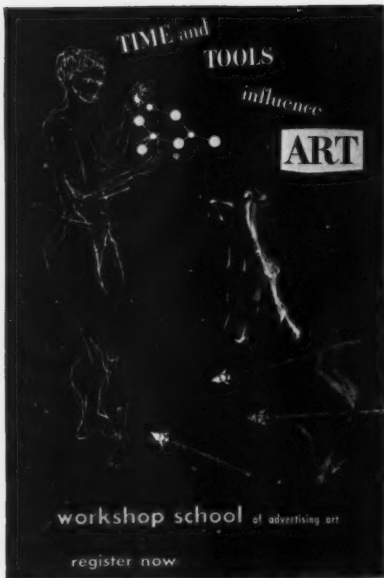
Contemporary German designs, freed from pre-war controls, have made full use of the modern idiom. Hans Aicher produces a fluid form and controlled lettering to make an effective composition.

**say it
fast...
often...
in color**



**subway
posters**

ERIK RITSCHÉ

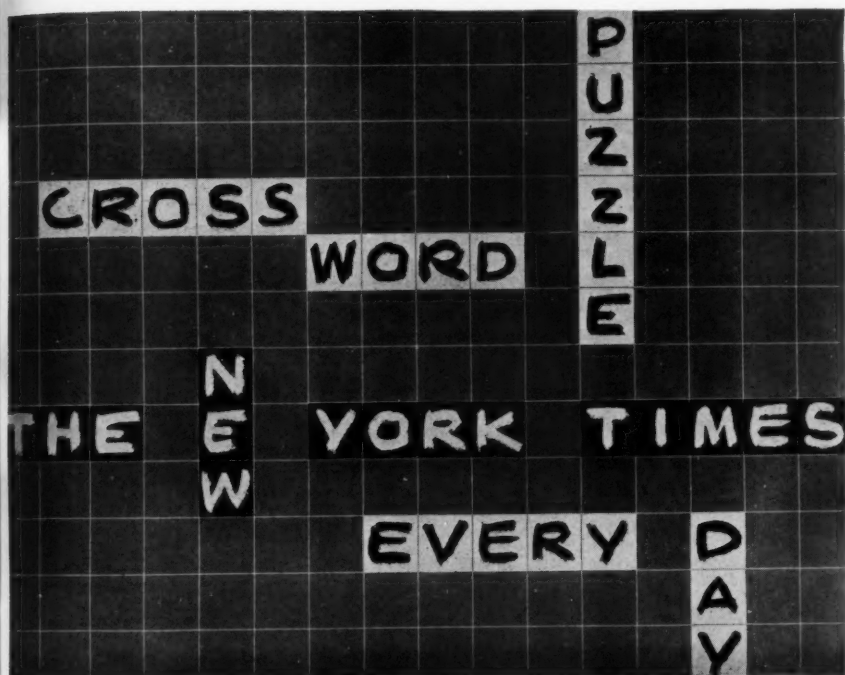




above
The pride of Willow Run, 1948
Paul RAND (American)

left
New York Times, 1950
George KRIKORIAN (American)

below
CIAM 7th International Congress
of Modern Architecture, 1949
LUBER (Italian)



opposite, above
Time and Tools influence Art, 1949
Milton WYNNE (American)

Film Poster, 1949
ZAMECNIK-STRYJECKI (Polish)

Swiss Cinema, 1950
Hans ERNI (Swiss)

center
American Airlines, 1948
E. McKnight KAUFFER (American)

Museum announcement, 1951
DANILO DE PRETE (Brazilian)

Form follows Function, 1949
A. F. ARNOLD (American)

below
School Reform, 1948?
Hans AICHER (German)

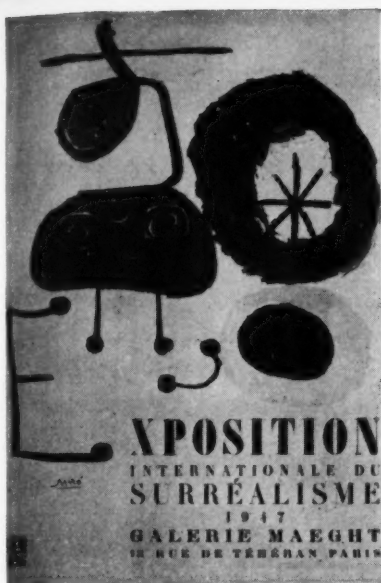
Wipe Out Discrimination, 1948
Milton ACKOFF (American)

International Exhibition of Travel Posters, 1948
DUDA, MISEK and TYFA (Czech)
Team of 3 artists



Exhibition of his work, 1950?
Georges BRAQUE (French)





International Exhibition of Surrealism, 1947
Joan MIRO (Spanish)

In Western Europe, the scales have been tipped by the rise of the Italian graphic artist who is disregarding the commonplace and executing highly personal designs. In France, the lack of business enterprise and the shortage of paper in the post-war period dulled the commercial output somewhat. But in the cultural sphere one can mention with high praise the delightful exhibition announcements which reflect the interchangeability of the talents of painters who design their own posters. Picasso's lithograph for his pottery exhibition is a sure, free, design with the unusual placement of nose and eyes of which he is a practiced master; Miro relates his lettering to pictorial symbols, animates their form and thus enlivens the composition; Braque's rich brush strokes make a deceptively simple composition an entertaining, readable poster.

The Swiss posters are in the main excellent examples of pictorial symbolism with sparse captions. Hans Erni, of the younger generation, uses free pen and brush line to express fanciful imagery. He is able, versatile and provocative.

Pottery by Picasso, 1948
Pablo PICASSO (Spanish)



opposite

Shrinking Travel Time, 1948

LEWITT-HIM (Composite name of two artists: Jan Lewitt, George Him) (Polish) now in England.

Reproduced through courtesy of Pan American World Airways

The Museum believes that the work of the creative artist is an important social vehicle and that he functions as a part of the living world whether he paints easel pictures or designs posters. Posters have a social role to play—they give information, they counsel and teach, they are a medium of human need and necessity. They must catch the attention and sustain the interest either through immediate effect or by registering ideas and emotions to which the observer subconsciously reacts. The creative artist, by applying his probing insight, his deep understanding and dynamic imagination, can enrich a presentation, can translate into the universal language of the poster, the human, scientific and educational factors which must reach a vast public.

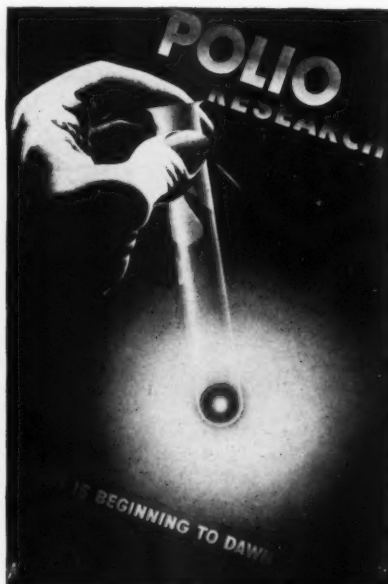
Consistent with this belief, the Museum collects posters for exhibition and study and seeks to stimulate progressive design in poster art through exhibition and competition. To date, we have sponsored 27 exhibitions and 4 competitions listed on the following page.

The Museum has also cooperated with the Office of Inter-American Affairs in securing the foremost American designers to create posters for the Latin American audience. Most recently (1949) the Museum initiated and co-sponsored with the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis a competition by invitation—twenty-three artists were invited to produce educational posters on polio. The artists were briefed with medical information, they were given access to the Foundations's files, they were encouraged to invent slogans to accompany their designs, and with no restrictions other than size, they were free to develop their ideas into visual form. The posters reproduced below and on the following page illustrate the prize winners in this competition. Three posters (the Matter and Bayer included) have already been published and distributed by the Foundation.

Mildred Constantine
Department of Architecture and Design



Maybe soon, 1949
Henry KOERNER (American)



Polio Research, 1949
Herbert BAYER (American)



Research Gives Hope, 1949
Leon KARP (American)

POSTER COMPETITIONS

- 1933 *Poster and Typography Contest*
- 1941 *Posters for National Defense for the
U. S. Treasury and Army Air Corps*
- 1942 *United Hemisphere Poster Competition*
- 1949 *Polio Poster Competition*

POSTER EXHIBITIONS

- 1933 *Exhibition of Poster and Typography Competition*
- 1933 *Toulouse-Lautrec Prints and Posters*
- 1936 *A. M. Cassandre*
- 1937 *E. McKnight Kauffer*
- 1937 *Spanish and United States Government Posters*
- 1941 *History of the Modern Poster*
- 1941 *Lettering in Poster Art*
- 1941 *National Defense Poster Competition*
- 1941 *Britain at War (poster section)*
- 1942 *U. S. Government Posters*
- 1942 *War Posters Today*
- 1942 *Anti-Hoarding Posters by N. Y. School Children*
- 1942 *Salvage Posters*
- 1942 *United Hemisphere Posters*
- 1942 *New Posters from England*
- 1943 *Soviet Posters*
- 1943 *National War Posters*
- 1944 *Art in Progress (poster section)*
- 1945 *War Posters (1944-1945)*
- 1948 *Ben Shahn (poster section)*
- 1948 *Bonnard Prints and Posters*
- 1949 *Posters (1945-1949)*
- 1949 *Master Prints from the Museum Collection*
- 1949 *Modern Art in Your Life (poster section)*
- 1949 *Polio Posters*
- 1950 *Posters from the Davis Collection*
- 1951 *Swiss Posters*

Department of Architecture and Design

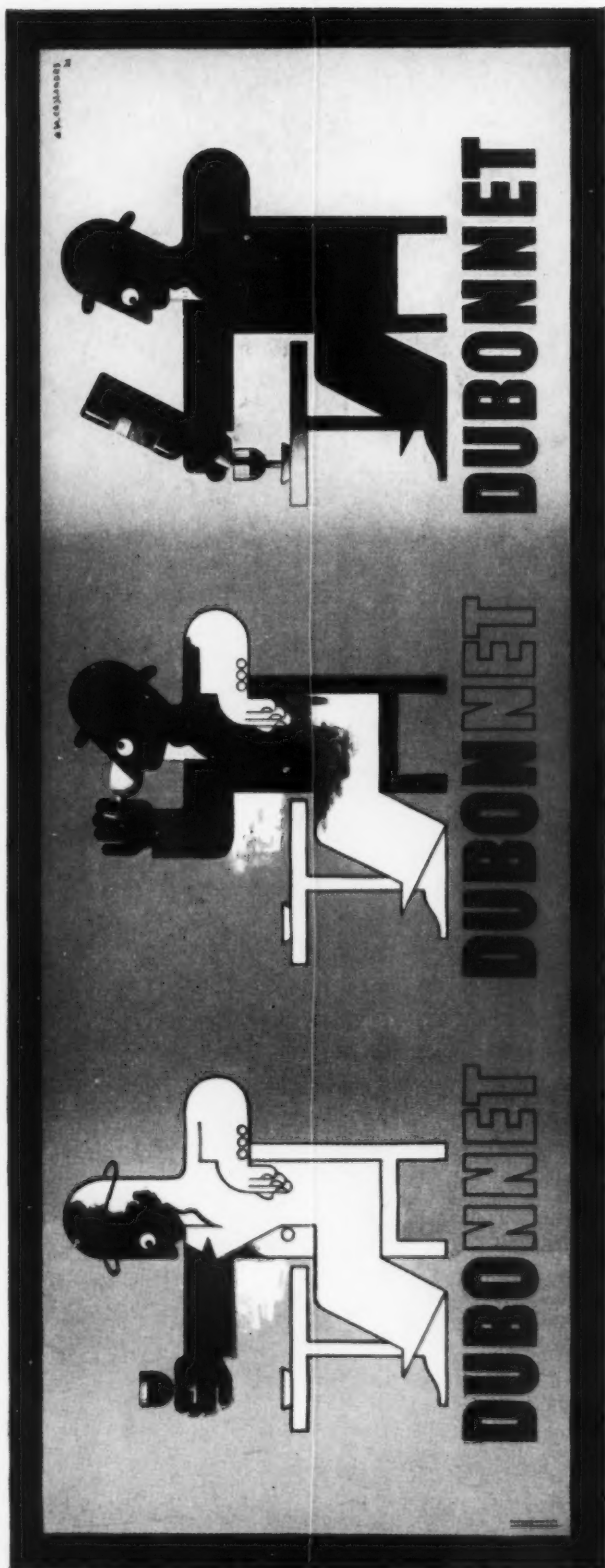
Philip C. Johnson, *Director*
Arthur Drexler, *Curator of Architecture*
Mildred Constantine, *Assistant Curator*
Greta Daniel, *Assistant Curator*
Margaret Jennings, *Secretary to the Director*

The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin: Vol. XVIII, No. 4, June 1951

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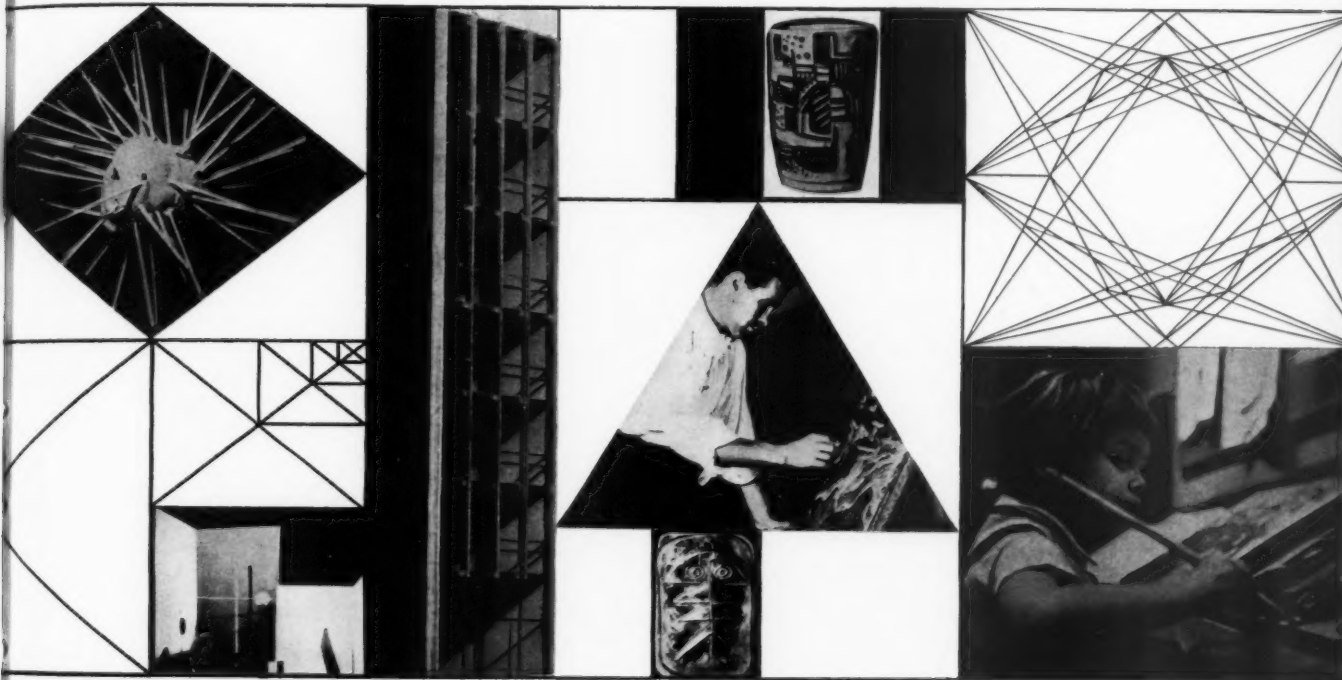


One of them had polio, 1949
Herbert MATTER (American)



Dubonnet, 1932
 A. M. CASSANDRE (French)
 Reproduced through courtesy of Dubonnet Corporation, Philadelphia, Pa.

CALIFORNIA
SEP 27 1951
STATE LIBRARY



CREATIVE ART

for children · young people · adults · schools

*the department of education
museum of modern art · new york*



Entrance to Children's Holiday Circus of Modern Art, 1943-1945

CREATIVE ART

for children · young people · adults · schools

"Friends and relatives say that my ten-year-old son is talented. Will you exhibit his paintings in your museum?" asks a proud mother. "There is no art teacher in the school my children attend and the class teacher has them copy pictures or fill in shapes with color. I have read that this is bad for children. Where can I find a good art class for them?" writes the mother of a six-year-old girl and an eight-year-old boy. A lawyer, past middle age, who wants to paint in his free time, signs his letter "an eager but frightened beginner." Educators and schools all over the United States and from many foreign countries request information ranging from the setting up of an exhibition or planning a single course to the outlining of a curriculum or organizing a new art center. During the past few years alone, visitors from such scattered places as India, Okinawa, Japan, Sweden, Egypt, Australia, Peru, and Israel have come to The Museum of Modern Art to learn what we are doing and to take away "the newest ideas" for their own use.

Such requests as these, which are typical of hundreds received by the Museum, not only reveal the growing and vital need for art both at home and abroad, but they indicate some of the reasons for the broad scope and increased activities of the Museum's Department of Education. The proud mother, like many parents who want to exhibit their children's work, needs to understand the pitfalls of exhibiting children's work and how it can stifle her child's creative ability unless handled very carefully, with emphasis on the creative process rather than the end product. The mother who seeks a good art class for her children is really the victim of a false economy on the part of school administrators who look upon art as a frill, while the lawyer who wants an art class will probably become discouraged if he is subjected to the *laissez-faire* methods of a hobby group.

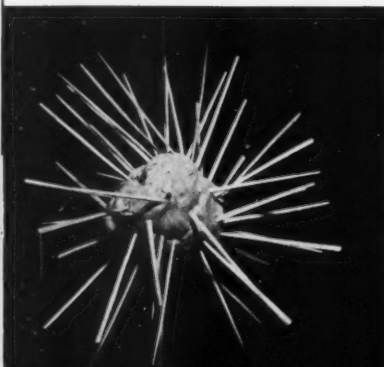
While all the activities of the Museum are educational in nature, the Department of Education has the special duty of meeting the needs of the child and the adult who seek art for personal satisfaction, of educating the public in understanding the importance of creative experience, and of stimulating the teaching profession in promoting art for the purpose of general education. This bulletin is devoted to a description of all the work of the Museum's Department of Education. But it might also be regarded as a dedication for the opening of the People's Art Center in its new and efficient studios and shops in the reinforced concrete structure with its glass and steel facade adjoining the Museum building, known as the Grace Rainey Rogers Memorial. Here the classes for children and adults will find a permanent home after a fourteen-year pilgrimage that began in the *Time & Life* Building and stopped for varying periods at 54th Street, 56th Street and at 681 Fifth Avenue.

GROWTH OF THE DEPARTMENT 1937-1951

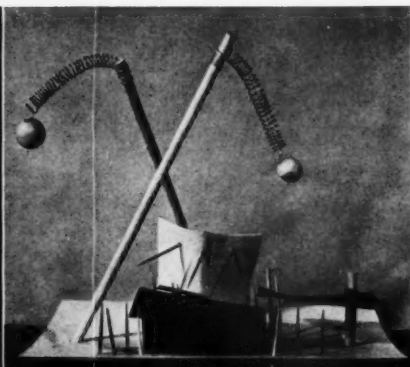
The success of the Department in discovering and meeting educational needs of public schools and the general public is most easily demonstrated by the growth of its operations from a pilot project in 1937 to a full-scale department with an extensive and varied program in 1951. In 1937 the staff included a part-time director and a secretary; the program consisted of teaching four high school classes a week, preparing and circulating visual teaching materials to ten high schools, and operating the Young People's Gallery. Today, the staff includes a full-time director with six assistants and twenty-four teachers both full- and part-time, who together conduct a program that serves fifty New York City Public High Schools with special art materials throughout the year, operate the Young People's Gallery and teach approximately five hundred children and three hundred adults a week, offering seventy-seven different classes at the People's Art Center. In addition, the Department cooperates in the administration of the activities of the Committee on Art Education which has a membership of 1200 teachers from all parts of the country, in a variety of projects including the annual conference, monthly seminars and the preparation of visual aids and publications.

The Department also carries on a wide range of special projects each meeting a particular need, but all related to developing creative interests of

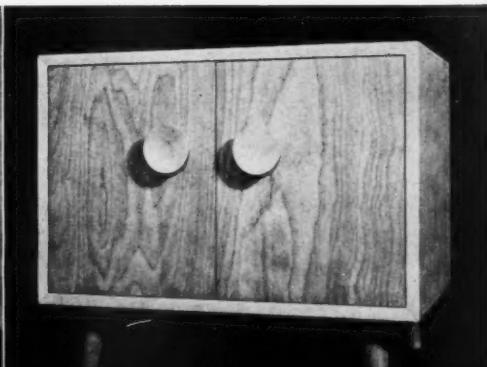
Child, aged 3 years



High school student



Adult



people, young and old, and to helping enrich their daily living through an understanding of the arts of our time. While most of the activities have been carried on since 1937, a major object is to relinquish services when they have fulfilled the particular need or have been adopted by another organization, so that the Department can continue to experiment and pioneer in new directions. An example of a specialized activity being converted into a more general service was the transformation of the War Veterans' Art Center, the distinguished wartime program, into the People's Art Center with classes for adult laymen in 1948 when the need which motivated the Veterans' Center was being met by other organizations.

The importance of art today is growing rather than diminishing and will continue to grow. As the public and educators recognize the value of art in the emotional and mental growth of every child, as more adults look to art for their leisure time pleasure and as a release from the tension of the times, the Department will continue to search for new and better ways to meet the emerging demands.

*Children making collages and constructions, Children's Holiday Carnival of Modern Art, 1949-1951.
photo, Newspictures; courtesy of Monsanto Chemical Company*





Children painting



*High school student
making a construction*



Adult in painting class for beginners

The People's Art Center offers 77 classes for children, young people and adults in a variety of expressions and media. It seeks to develop individual creativeness and an awareness of design and craftsmanship. Approximately 500 children and 300 adults attend classes each week.

THE PEOPLE'S ART CENTER

The major objective of the People's Art Center is to provide creative opportunities to help in the general growth of the child and to satisfy the leisure time interests of the adult. Anyone is eligible to join the classes; the basic requirement is an interest in art.

Classes for children and young people between the ages of three and eighteen years are offered in a variety of expressions and media—painting, clay, collage and construction work. Children are enrolled in classes by age groups and no attempt is made to single out the exceptional or "talented" children. It has been found that when this is done, the more able child becomes isolated, and at the same time, the less able child becomes frustrated by the competitive standards thus established. By attempting to satisfy the creative aptitude of every child to the fullest possible degree, both the "average" and "gifted" child benefit. Over-specialization often results in the child tending to imitate the adult artist and in being uprooted from his own social group upon which he depends for acceptance and personal satisfaction.

New classes are introduced each year to meet special needs or to explore new teaching possibilities. The class for parents and young children, for example, was organized to help parents understand children's creative development by working with them in the same activities and observing the teacher as she works. This fall for the first time, a woodworking class for fathers and sons (aged eleven to fourteen years) will be introduced.

There is so much confusion today as to how children should be taught through art that it seems necessary to explain some basic principles of creative education. There are two extremes of teaching: by rule and imitation, or not teaching at all. The solution is not a compromise between the two but a totally new concept of education based on knowledge of the child's creative and psychological growth and on mastery of teaching techniques needed for their development.

INDOCTRINARY AND CREATIVE TEACHING

It should not be necessary to dwell upon the inhibiting influence of indoctrinary methods as they ought to be things of the past. Their destructive effect was revealed by educational leaders at least a quarter of a century ago. However, they are not of the past for one sees cut out paper tulips on kindergarten school windows all over the country, parents buy their children picture books to color or copy from, and pseudo-devices of *how-to-draw* are flourishing on television programs and in visual aids such as film strips and motion pictures used in the classroom or piped directly into the home.

On the other hand, the *laissez-faire* methods can be equally destructive. Many parents and teachers have accepted the notion that if the child is let completely alone but provided with the right materials he will develop on his own. It would be most convenient as well as economical if this were so but unfortunately it is not the case. Children need guidance and help in their creative development just as they do in mental and emotional growth. There is no magic or mystery about creative teaching in art. The method used follows a knowledge of child growth and the child's basic creative needs and interests as an individual and a member of a social group. This calls for a highly competent teacher trained in both child psychology and creative techniques. For this reason, the Center chooses its staff with great care. Classes meet once a week for fifteen sessions in the Fall Term and fifteen sessions in the Spring Term. The size of classes is limited to provide for individual attention to each child.

CHILDREN'S CLASSES: PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHING METHOD TEACHING AT THE CENTER

The methods of instruction used at the Center are informal and individual. There are no "drawing classes" as such, and no set exercises in perspective

or color. The teachers do not give a specific rule or lesson on a certain day because learning is an individual process and seldom does everyone in a group need to know the same thing at the same time. The rate of learning for each child is different, depending on experience, ability and perception.

Parents who have been trained by the indoctrinary methods of the past and were taught to make color wheels or copy perspective charts, are often baffled by this informal method of training. They sometimes want their children taught by old formal methods, even though they readily admit that those methods inculcated neither interest nor ability in themselves. Parents who do not understand informal teaching sometimes ask their child what he learned that day and are disappointed when the child answers, "Nothing." Actually such a response is justified because the development of the creative process is so natural and so integrated with other aspects of growth that the child is not aware that he is learning, even though his perceptions and sensitivity are being cultivated and deepened in ways apparent to the teacher.

On the other hand, the Center does not subscribe to the theory that if the child is left alone and simply provided with the right materials he will flourish creatively on his own. This abandonment of the child simply exposes him to the imitative influences of the comic strip or makes him the prey of unscrupulous exploiters selling cheap art sets or *how-to-become-an-artist* books. The most dangerous exploiters, however, are those who use the enchantment of television and allow individuals masquerading as artists to impose tricks and clichés on the child. Teaching by the informal process means that the teacher must be constantly sensitive to the needs of each individual and be able to stimulate and satisfy emerging interests.

HOW THE CHILD GROWS

With the very young child, three to five years, the learning process is principally one of exploring ideas, media and materials in a spontaneous and direct manner. The child works with paint, clay, metal, plastics, paper and wood; discovers their particular qualities and learns how to use them to communicate his ideas in simple and original creations. He is introduced to the arts of our time by

the many good color reproductions that are available and by original painting and sculpture borrowed from the Museum Collection. Reproductions and original works are placed about the studio where they can be casually observed by the children or may become the basis for discussion between them and the teacher.

With older children, six to twelve years, the art experience is made more challenging, and more conscious attention is given to design and craftsmanship. If the need arises and the occasion warrants, the whole group may undertake the same project such as the expression of a common emotional experience or the introduction of a new concept or technique such as making mobiles. As children grow older the art experience becomes more profound and while exploration is always a major objective, children learn to organize and communicate their feelings and ideas with greater awareness of the esthetic means.

Teen-agers are quite capable of considering projects of growing complexity, both in ideas and in esthetic content, and of motivating their own creative interest. They are exposed to a wider range of art experience and to the heritage of the past and present. Emphasis is placed on a study of the arts of our time because it is the world in which the young people live. As the individual grows toward maturity, the art experience is not only broadened but deepened.

In addition to reproductions and original works brought into the studio, each child in the Museum classes is given a membership card which admits him to the Museum at any time during the term. In this way the Museum's wealth of contemporary art becomes an informal laboratory for enriching the individual's creative experience.

PARENT COOPERATION

An understanding between parent and teacher is indispensable to the success of the child's esthetic experience. Whether the parent takes a negative or positive attitude, the influence is felt by the child. Overpraise, saying the child's work is wonderful, or chiding, saying "What is that supposed to be?" or indifference, all have their effect upon the child. Sometimes parent and teacher disagree and the child is apt to become the helpless victim of an adult difference or hostility.

The Center makes a specific effort to inform the parents on its teaching objectives. Teachers hold meetings where they explain their aims and methods and relate them to the work and experience in progress. Parents can then ask any questions or discuss differences. In addition, parents may have a private interview with the teacher about their children. Where there is some question of a child's adjustment, the teacher requests the interview. It may seem that this is putting great emphasis on a class to which a child comes only once a week, but we feel that the parents' cooperation is necessary to integrate the art experience with the child's life.

ADULT CLASSES: A NEW PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHING METHOD

The adult classes are offered to provide an opportunity for personal pleasure and cultural enrichment. The aim is to help people derive satisfaction from participation in a creative activity, and not from the promise of becoming professional artists or craftsmen, or of selling or exhibiting their work. The attempt to compete with professional artists usually leads to disappointment and frustration, and the student misses the important contribution that creative activity can make to the enjoyment of daily living. Therefore, the philosophy of the People's Art Center and the techniques used in the adult classes are focused on the creative needs of laymen.

TEACHING METHOD BASED ON WAR VETERANS' ART CENTER

The development of the creative aptitudes of the adult layman has never before been seriously considered in education. The common approach of hobby classes which encourage dilettante attitudes, where anything of an "artsy-craftsy" nature is made, soon leads to the disintegration of interest and effort. Another mistaken approach is the assumption that the adult simply needs a little less training than the professional art student, and a little more than the child. The specialized methods of the art school discourage the timid and mislead the beginner. Until recently the amateur remained the orphan of art education.

Actually the adult layman requires an entirely new method of teaching based on a different psychology and technique of instruction. This problem has been studied and successfully worked out in the pioneer War Veterans' Art Center, forerunner of the People's Art Center, the outstanding experiment inspired by the late Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and cosponsored by Mr. Stephen C. Clark from 1944 to 1948.* The staff of the People's Art Center is fortunate in having this four-year experience in the Veterans' Center and many of the techniques developed with veterans have been applied to the present adult classes.

ORIENTATION COURSE

The most revolutionary experiment is the Orientation Course first introduced in the Veterans' Center. Because many adults are not at all sure of the arts they will find most satisfying, this course permits them to explore a variety of media and techniques until they discover the one that suits them best. The course also provides a foundation in design which serves the student when he chooses a more specialized course. Until this course was established, many laymen chose art expressions which were unsuited to them and as a result gave up their interest in art. As far as is known, the Orientation Course did not exist before the War Veterans' Art Center, but such a course has since been adopted by many art centers and schools throughout the country.

OTHER COURSES

Other courses in the wide range offered include classes in painting, ceramics, jewelry, woodworking and life. A new course, Criticism and Analysis, is introduced this fall for amateurs who feel independent enough to work on their own but wish the guidance and criticism of an experienced artist-teacher.

Each class meets once a week for a two- or three-hour session, fifteen sessions each term. Day and evening classes are offered. In each class the first projects are so simple that a measure of success and confidence on the part of the beginner is assured. As the class progresses, the projects become more complex and the student gradually gains confidence and becomes able to proceed on his own

* Museum of Modern Art Bulletin, September 1945, Vol. XIII, No. 1

motivation, and to explore new materials. Individual attention is given to each student because there is great variation in ability and speed in learning.

IMITATION RESULTS IN FRUSTRATION

It is the unique method of instruction and the emphasis on good design and craftsmanship that distinguishes the adult classes rather than variety of courses offered or the well-planned studios and shops. Most amateur classes permit or even encourage students to copy professional work. The Center is consistent in its opposition to copying or imitating of any kind. Often a beginner in a jewelry class, for example, will decide that he wants to copy a pin he has seen in Jensen's window, or a painting student will say that he wants to paint like an artist whose work he has admired. Teachers at the Center discourage this as effectively as possible. One reason is that a beginner is obviously going to be disappointed if he attempts to reproduce the finished product of a master craftsman or professional artist. More important, however, is the fact that imitation deprives the individual of the chance to discover his own creative power, and it is that discovery which is the heart of art expression. Instead of developing his own creative ideas, the student who copies gains at first a false feeling of accomplishment which in turn often results in great frustration when he later realizes that he has not developed his own powers of creation.

The Center staff believes that education for the amateur in art is especially important today to satisfy the healthy manifestation of the creative interest of our society. The growing desire for art has been termed by one authority "The New Renaissance." It is really a renaissance of "appreciation" of art, or of the enjoyment of art for one's own spiritual and emotional satisfaction rather than a renaissance of great productions of art. If

this new awareness of the importance of art is properly developed and directed, it can become of advantage to both the professional artist and the general public. An understanding, interested and informed public can help support contemporary artists by purchasing and viewing their works. At the same time they will find other aspects of their own lives enriched through closer contact with one of the arts. On the other hand, if the new awareness is neglected, we may close off one of the avenues that can lead to the solution of many current emotional problems and to a wider and perhaps more profound enjoyment of the art of our time.

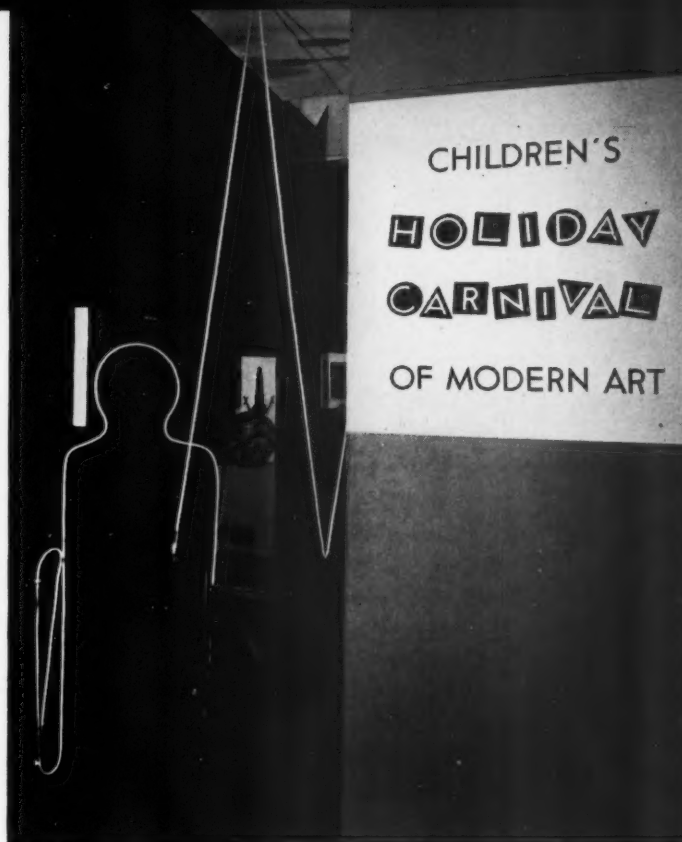
WHY DOES THE GENERAL PUBLIC SEEK ART TODAY?

One is tempted to speculate on the reasons underlying this spontaneous attraction toward art experience on the part of adults who never before gave it as much as a thought. Many applicants have been questioned and the answers run as follows: "I just want to try my hand at it." "My friend paints and seems to get a kick out of it so I thought I might like it too." "I have wanted to do something in art since I was a child." A lawyer probably gave the most personal answer when he said, "All my life I practiced law for a living and now I want to do something entirely for myself."

The majority of adults however betray a deadly earnest interest, one almost approaching spiritual hunger behind their casual remarks. When they succeed in their desire they express child-like delight, when they fail their disappointment seems devastating. For the most part the dilettante of yesterday seeking an "artistic patina" or the cultural snob is conspicuously absent. One wonders whether there is not a relationship between the growing power of destructiveness on the part of our scientific genius, and that indescribable urge for creation on the part of the general public.

Since 1937 the Young People's Gallery has shown 83 exhibitions on children's art, exclusive of the Carnival, to help promote a better understanding of the creative development of children on the part of parents, teachers and the general public.

The Children's Holiday Carnival has been repeated ten times in nine years with an average of 2000 children a year participating in its activities.



Contour gate made to the size of an average eight-year-old, at entrance to Children's Holiday Carnival 1949-1951

Exhibition of collages and constructions by children aged 3-13 years from the classes of the People's Art Center



THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S GALLERY A PLACE FOR PROMOTING CREATIVE TEACHING

The original object of the Young People's Gallery was to provide a place for children in an adult museum, to communicate the ideas and activities of the Department, and to bring new experiments in art education to parents, teachers and the general public. There is no way of recording the large numbers who have visited the gallery over the past fourteen years to see its eighty-three exhibitions. These exhibitions have included such subjects as Pictures for Children, the work of the Museum classes for children and adults, parents and children's classes, children's work from other countries, and new art furniture and equipment designed for children and young people.

The first object of providing a place in the Museum for children, developed into a type of educational activity, the Children's Holiday Carnival of Modern Art, which has become known and imitated in the United States and in many foreign countries. The Carnival has gone under different names, such as the Circus or Fair, but the same underlying principle governs the activity.

The Carnival is run on specific principles of child psychology and according to particular theories about creative growth. The importance of an environment designed for visual appeal as a setting for exposing children to modern art is one principle. Another is that play can be used as a source of orientation for the child's creative learning because it stimulates his imagination and gives him opportunity to assume adult roles usually denied him in real life—a basic need in growing up.

The installation of the Carnival is important and is planned to offer visual, tactile and kinesthetic experience for the children. Each year there are two major areas in the plan. First is an exhibition area where toys, paintings and sculpture by modern artists are set up. There are plastic mobiles, a jumping-jack, a machine that changes colored slides of the Museum Collection paintings when the child pushes a button. A particularly popular and ingenious device designed

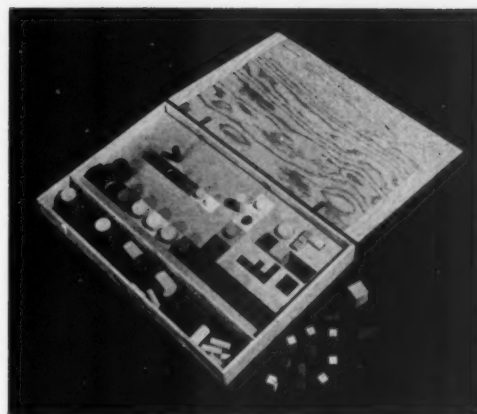
for the Carnival is a color player which is operated by the children somewhat like a piano, with a keyboard and foot pedals. By pressing the keys and the pedals, the child makes an endless series of colored abstract patterns on a screen. This experience helps the child in understanding and inventing abstract designs. Other toys used include a tightrope walker that sails across the ceiling when the child pulls a wire and a peephole abstract film strip that the child operates himself. Here too are placed paintings by modern artists and of particular importance, sculpture that the child can climb on and touch. Intimacy with works of art is important in the child's understanding. The child learns texture and form through his sense of touch and feeling.

In the second area, a studio workshop is set up with easels, paper and paints ranged around the walls while a large work table dominates the center of the room where the children make collages, constructions and mobiles. Thus the necessary principle of letting the child follow the inspiration received from seeing artists' work by creating his own ideas is followed.

The greatest contribution of the Carnival has probably been its dramatization of creative activity so that parents and educators have clamored to see it and have adopted features of it for school and home use. As one father said, "I don't know what the art value (of the Carnival) is but anything that will get my eight-year-old so excited that he gets up at six and concentrates an hour at painting must be terrific and I'm for it." The appeal of the Carnival has been such that it has received more public attention in newspapers, magazines, on radios and television than any other single educational activity of the Museum. Teachers from all over this country and from many foreign countries have adopted ideas from the Carnival or carried away blueprints of its equipment and toys.

The second function of the Young People's

Gallery, presenting new and interesting experiments in art, has included a wide variety of exhibitions and visual materials covering age levels from pre-school through college. In its eighty-three exhibitions have been included children's art work from a variety of foreign countries, such as Japan and Sweden, samples of work from the children's and adult classes of the People's Art Center, art materials arranged for circulation to the New York City Public High Schools and exhibitions prepared in cooperation with the Committee on Art Education.



Color game

DESIGNED FOR CHILDREN

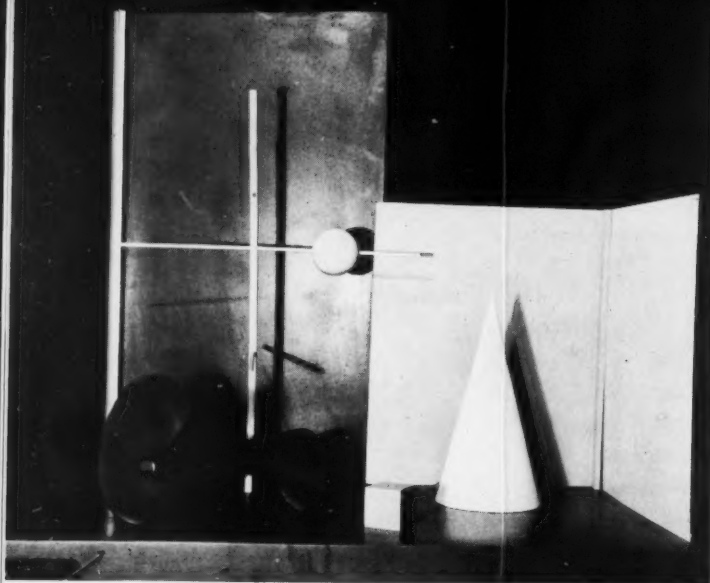
A special interest of the Department of Education stems partly from the Carnival—to encourage parents and educators to provide a stimulating place for the child to work in, and to purchase better designed art equipment and toys for children. As a result, easel tables, art sets, jigsaw puzzles made from the Museum color reproductions have been designed and produced by the Department from time to time. Several of these were exhibited some years ago in the Young People's Gallery and later circulated over the country under the title of Designed for Children. The aim of this endeavor is not to set up the Museum in the toy and children's art furniture business but to develop a demand for better designed art materials and to stimulate manufacturers to produce them.



Free-standing easel

*Children playing with
jigsaw puzzle made from
Museum color reproduction*





Design teaching model—mobile unit

Neighborhood planning model—mobile unit



*Packaged teaching materials
above: Teaching portfolio
below: Slide talk with text*

Library of texts

Library of photographic plates

Recorded slide talk



NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

MODERN ART GOES TO THE SCHOOLS

Virginia Murphy, the late Director of Art of the New York City Public High Schools, in 1949 estimated that 175,000 high school students each year see the exhibitions and other visual materials circulated by the Department of Education of the Museum. This program, begun in 1937 as a pilot project, included ten schools, of which only three were city high schools. Today, under a special program largely supported by the Board of Education, forty academic high schools and ten vocational high schools receive visual materials every month of the school year.

The significant aspect of this program is neither the vast proportion of students exposed to modern art nor the number of schools serviced, but rather the new and revolutionary materials developed by the Museum for the Board of Education of this city. Types of teaching aids have been designed to meet the varying concepts and interests of the adolescent and to conform with the limitations of a large school system. Among these are the teaching models which are packaged instructional materials including a small exhibition, background texts for the student to read, and units to assemble—a stage set, a room or a three dimensional construction—each boxed in a cabinet mounted on rollers so that it can be moved easily from classroom to classroom. Teaching models include neighborhood planning, interior design, costume, abstract design, display and theater art. Then there are teaching portfolios, a series of plates on a variety of subjects with text, to be used in the classroom on the chalk tray or bulletin board as a small exhibition, or passed around to the students. The portfolios, *Modern Sculpture*, *Texture and Pattern*, for example, now published by the Museum in quantity production for general distribution, originated in the program for city schools.

Lending libraries of color reproductions are provided so that a student may borrow a work of modern art and take it home and live with it. At

the same time he may perhaps indoctrinate his family into the enjoyment of the work. Slide talks made up of twenty-five to forty slides accompanied by text have been prepared for classroom or assembly use on such topics as *New Forms of Our Time*, *Adventure in Modern Art* and *What is Modern Painting?*

As the need arises and as opportunity permits, new materials are designed; this year the recorded slide talk was introduced for the first time. This contains a set of slides on a particular subject or craft with a commentary by an authority. This technique opens up the possibility of providing a series of talks on the arts and education for parents and teachers and it may be the next art aid produced by the Department for general distribution.

While it has been possible to prepare the various visual aids only for the New York City Schools the underlying concepts and many of the units have been reproduced or adapted by other schools and school systems. The program is constantly being re-evaluated and improved. At the end of each school year the teachers are asked to review the various teaching materials and make suggestions for new visual aids. Thus one of the most extensive services of the Museum's Department of Education is carried on outside the Museum as the material is taken to the school and integrated in the regular curriculum. Not until these ninety exhibitions, models, portfolios and other materials are amassed together in the Museum's receiving room is one aware of the magnitude of the program. It is reassuring and impressive that the largest school system in the world finds the arts of our time an important part of its teaching.

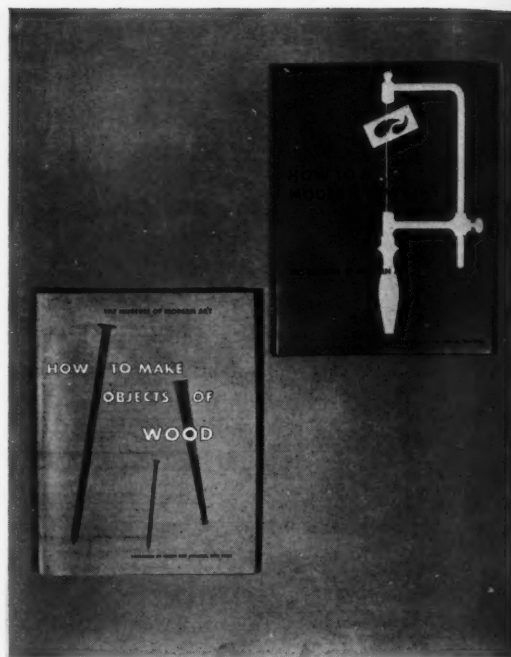
In addition to the circulating materials, each school receives fifty interchangeable annual student passes and two annual teacher passes so that visits may be made to the Museum to see the originals of modern art. Free classes are also open to New York City Public High School students

and special courses are given for the teachers.

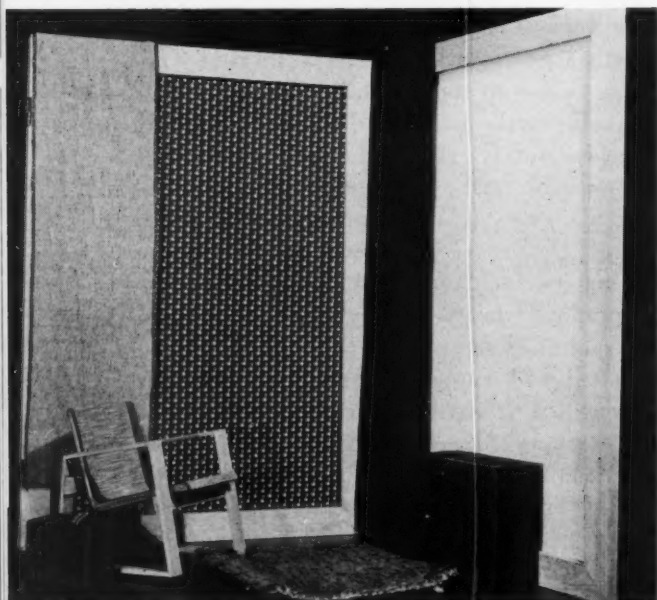
It is noteworthy that this program, which began as part of a project financed by the General Education Board, in which five museums took part, has not only continued along its original lines, but has increased and flourished beyond all expectations.

THE HOW TO DO IT SERIES

The series of publications on the arts which was started by the War Veterans' Art Center has met with gratifying success. Two of the series, How to Make Pottery and Ceramic Sculpture, and How To Make Modern Jewelry have been published and have together sold 24,657 copies to date. The third of the series, How To Make Objects of Wood, is being printed and should shortly be available.

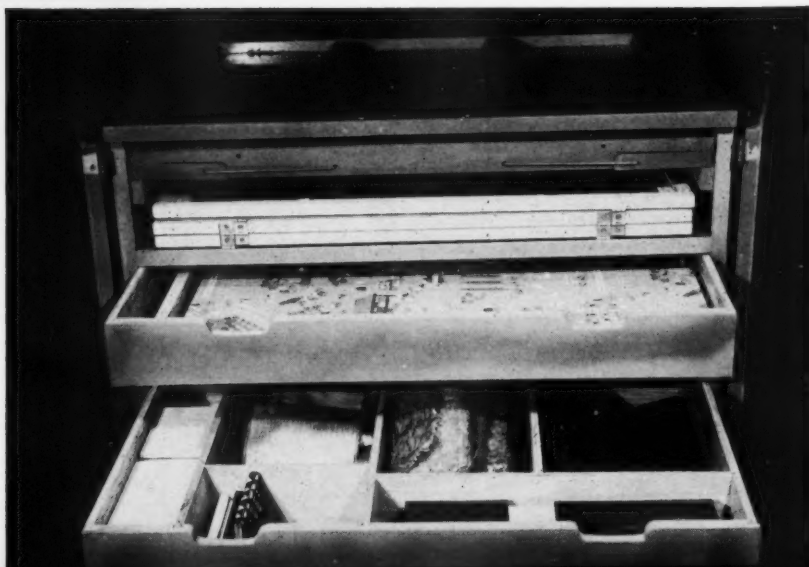


Two of the publications in the How To Do It series



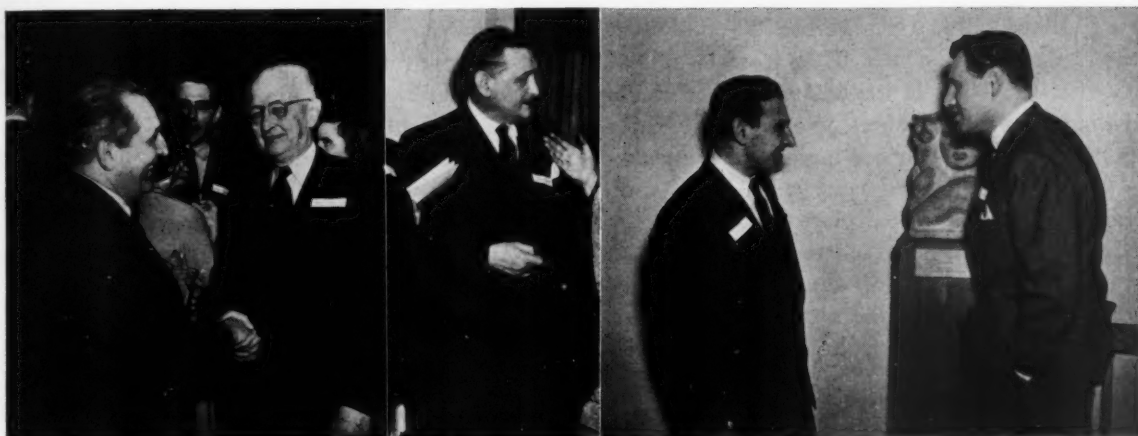
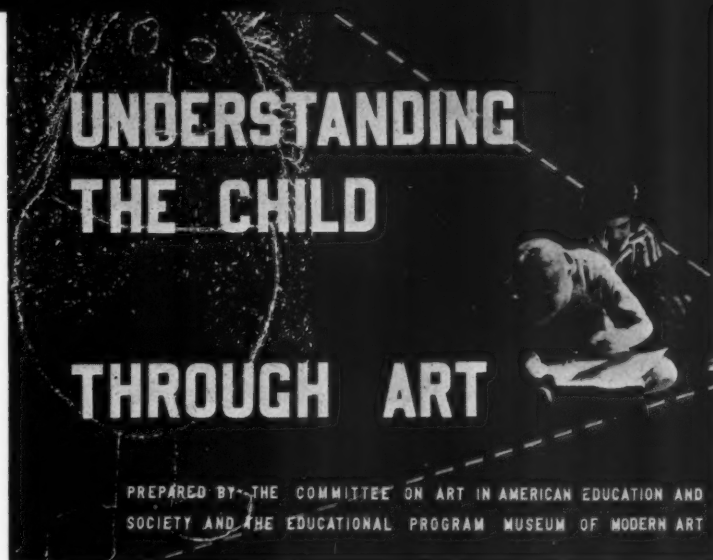
Interior design teaching model set up

Cabinet of interior design teaching model containing miniature furniture, rugs, drapes and wall panels



The Committee on Art Education is a national organization of art teachers and educators representing all age levels from pre-school through college and including art schools and teacher training schools. Now in its tenth year, it has 1200 members. The Committee is an avant-garde group working for better teaching methods and providing a forum for the discussion of new ideas in creative education.

Panel from an exhibition prepared by the Committee and the Museum



Reception at 1951 Annual Conference. left to right: J. B. Neumann, Charles Sheeler, Jacques Lipchitz, Victor D'Amico, Nelson Rockefeller. photos by John Langley

THE COMMITTEE ON ART EDUCATION LEADERSHIP IN CREATIVE EDUCATION

Almost ten years ago a small group of people met in the Young People's Gallery and founded what was to become the Committee on Art Education. Today this Committee has a membership of 1200 teachers representing pre-school, elementary school, high school, college, and university levels and art schools from all over the United States and several foreign countries.

The purpose of the Committee is to bring together educators interested in formulating a basic philosophy of art education and promoting creative teaching on the highest possible level. The fact that the Committee has grown so rapidly demonstrates the need for such an organization. From the beginning the Committee has been dedicated to establishing a high standard of achieve-

ment, whether in the layout of its conference program, planning the annual conference, or implementing a long-range philosophy of education.

It seems inevitable that the founders should have sought the cooperation of the Museum of Modern Art, because the Museum represented the ideals which the Committee valued. It was, therefore, most gratifying when the Museum accepted sponsorship of the Committee and the union has proved advantageous to both organizations.

The membership now includes a majority of distinguished art educators in the United States and Canada, and the Committee is attracting the alert younger teachers from whom will come future leaders. About one-third of the members are students in training schools and colleges, many of whom come in groups to the annual conference. The Buffalo State Teachers College this spring sent a group of forty students from its senior class for the third successive year. The greatest value of the Committee is not in the leadership of the few individuals, but in the leadership of the large group of its members from various regions of the country—town, village, and city—who exchange teaching experiences and explore new and better creative methods. The Committee seeks always to bring before its membership outstanding thinkers of our time in regard to the arts in education to stimulate its efforts and widen its vision. Speakers at annual conferences have included: Herbert Read, Walter Gropius, Lewis Mumford, Meyer Schapiro, Waldo Frank, Irwin Edman and Margaret Mead. Committee opinion on many important issues has been formulated and refined

at conference study sessions. The Committee is opposed to attempts to exploit the child such as the giving of prizes in contests, or promoting sales of books and art materials through art-made-easy lessons on television programs. It is against outmoded methods of teaching as well as the *laissez-faire* tendency which is gaining favor in schools of education.

The Committee is endeavoring to make both parents and general educators aware of the importance of well-guided creative education for children through conferences, publications, slide talks, and exhibitions. The constructive influence of the Committee is unmistakable. In addition to the increase of its membership and growth of its activities, the Committee has influenced both the field of art and general education.

The association between the Committee and the Museum has proved valuable in providing research for developing new activities, publications, and exhibitions. Notably, the subjects of three Museum teaching portfolios resulted from suggestions made by the Committee Council and a poll taken of its members. Today, perhaps more than ever in the ten years of its existence, the Committee on Art Education is needed to assure the survival of creative education. With each war has come the threat to art in the schools on the assumption that art is a luxury. The possibility of a third world war has revived the tendency to curtail art and, as during its early years, the Committee is endeavoring to make educators and parents aware that creative art education is an investment toward peace. No teacher can be content with his individual endeavor. He needs the cooperation of other art teachers under a guided program. The ivory tower concept of art is obsolete. Art education must help to orient the individual to a world concept of living.

The Committee on Art Education is now a national organization with national influence and prestige. It will continue to be an *avant-garde* group, exploring new techniques, but maintaining the basic values. Upon this foundation its reason for continuation and growth is affirmed.

Construction workshop for teachers during the 1950 Annual Conference; Robert Else, instructor. photo by Max Jaikin



EVALUATION

A report is indirectly an evaluation because one selects and points up the information presented. The increase in activities over the years, the growth in the number of individuals who have been satisfied, the extension of services beyond the museum, all are evidence of achievement. Yet one is conscious that the American tendency is to measure success by quantity and size and to overlook the intangibles of quality. It is, of course, difficult to convey or measure the expressions of delight on the faces of the thousands of children who attended the Carnival or to say exactly what a child takes home from an art class of the People's Art Center beyond the finished work, although the

instructors are certain that a wonderful and vital transformation is taking place. One cannot tell how profoundly the materials sent to the New York City schools affect the individual student even though the teachers declare that these materials are indispensable to their work, or what it is that the art teacher from Peoria takes back to her classroom when she says that the Conference of the Committee on Art Education has changed her whole point of view. If these could be described effectively this report would be much more inspiring: if they could be evaluated our sense of achievement would be more reassuring.

THE ROLE OF THE ART MUSEUM IN EDUCATION

Does the art museum have a real function in education? Should it deal only with the presentation and interpretation of original works of art or should it also concern itself with the large media of communication such as motion pictures, radio and television? Should it offer creative classes in the arts and crafts or is this solely the province of the public and private school?

These are questions confronting museum educators. Space does not allow a complete answer here but some of the basic considerations can be explored. There is a feeling that an art museum may duplicate the function of the schools by giving art courses or compete with commercial organizations which produce visual materials, art equipment and toys. The fact is that the need is so great for such materials that if all the organizations involved were to step up production three-fold it would not begin to meet the urgent need on the part of education. If, however, only those materials which attained a high standard of quality were considered, available material would be reduced marked-

ly. The experience of The Museum of Modern Art and other museums seriously concerned with education, conclusively shows that not only does the museum have a function in education, but that this function is unique and necessary. The museum is a source for the most valuable means of extending the understanding of the child because it contains original works of art, prints of masterpieces, models without which creative experience can be neither profound nor enriching to the individual.

The special function of the educational department in an art museum is to make the art materials visually appealing and present them in terms of the perception, needs and interests of the age levels concerned. The educational department also integrates the various resources of the museum: the expert knowledge of the curators, the craftsmanship of the designers and technicians with the needs of the child and the curriculum. The school is not equipped nor should it be expected to prepare these materials for itself. Many efforts have been made by schools or school systems to produce

their own visual materials but these efforts have eventually been abandoned in favor of the more important and pressing responsibility of the teaching program.

On the question, Should the art museum hold creative classes?—the answer would in many cases depend on the particular museum and locality. In regions where sufficient creative opportunity is given children by the schools, there is no need for the museum to offer creative classes, but such cases are rare. In most situations, a museum must supplement or offer art because the school fails to do so. A more important factor is that the museum can help education by exploring new teaching methods and techniques. As budgets are reduced and art is curtailed in the schools, the need for experimentation which is the very life of growth in education becomes greater. The museum, there-

fore, is the last remaining source of such experimentation and through this service alone can offer the schools a valuable aid. The art museum has just begun to recognize its role in education. It is still pioneering as an instrument of education. With the increased production of visual materials by the commercial firms, many of whom are exploiting the child rather than interested in his creative welfare, and with the rise of television as an effective and indelible means of visual communication, the museum, along with other educational institutions, has a tremendous challenge and responsibility to meet. Unless quality in regard to both the esthetic and educational objectives are maintained, the creative education of all youth is jeopardized.

Victor D'Amico

STAFF OF DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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